

50 STORIES FROM RUSSIA'S GREATEST AUTHORS



ALEKSANDR PUSHKIN, NIKOLAI GOGOL,
FYODOR DOSTOEVSKY,
ANTON CHEKHOV, LEO TOLSTOY,
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**Short Works, Stories and Novellas of Anton
Chekhov, Fyodor Dostoevsky, Nikolai
Gogol, Leo Tolstoy, Alexander Pushkin,
Maxim Gorky, Mikhail Bulgakov**

This book collects a magnificent set of works by Russian classical authors: Alexander Pushkin, Nikolai Gogol, Fyodor Dostoyevsky, Anton Chekhov, Leo Tolstoy, Mikhail Bulgakov. Each original story, springing from a common creative heritage, delivers a glimpse of the immortal Russian Soul and has influenced modern literary trends.

These stories are interesting to their core and will bring pleasure to readers.

Get ready to immerse yourself within these immortal works that have long been counted among the best of classic world literature: Fyodor Dostoevsky. The Dream of a Ridiculous Man, Fyodor Dostoevsky. Notes from the Underground, Ivan Turgenev. First Love, Alexander Pushkin. The Queen of Spades, Leo Tolstoy. The Death of Ivan Ilyich, Leo Tolstoy. A Russian Christmas Party, Anton Chekhov. The Wife, Anton Chekhov. A Dead Body, Anton Chekhov. The Beggar, Leonid Andreyev. The Little Angel, Nikolai Gogol. The Nose, Nikolai Gogol. The Cloak, Nikolai Gogol. The Mantle, Mikhail Bulgakov. The Embroidered Towel – from A Young Doctor's Notebook and others.

FIODOR DOSTOIEVSKI

THE DREAM OF A RIDICULOUS MAN

I

I am a ridiculous person. Now they call me a madman. That would be a promotion if it were not that I remain as ridiculous in their eyes as before. But now I do not resent it, they are all dear to me now, even when they laugh at me-and, indeed, it is just then that they are particularly dear to me. I could join in their laughter-not exactly at myself, but through affection for them, if I did not feel so sad as I look at them. Sad because they do not know the truth and I do know it. Oh, how hard it is to be the only one who knows the truth! But they won't understand that. No, they won't understand it.

In old days I used to be miserable at seeming ridiculous. Not seeming, but being. I have always been ridiculous, and I have known it, perhaps, from the hour I was born. Perhaps from the time I was seven years old I knew I was ridiculous. Afterwards I went to school, studied at the university, and, do you know, the more I learned, the more thoroughly I understood that I was ridiculous. So that it seemed in the end as though all the sciences I studied at the university existed only to prove and make evident to me as I went more deeply into them that I was ridiculous. It was the same with life as it was with science. With every year the same consciousness of the ridiculous figure I cut in every relation grew and strengthened. Every one always laughed at me. But not one of them knew or guessed that if there were one man on earth who knew better than anybody else that I was absurd, it was myself, and what I resented most of all was that they did not know that. But that was my own fault; I was so proud that nothing would have ever induced me to tell it to any one. This pride grew in me with the years; and if it had happened that I allowed myself to confess to any one that I was ridiculous, I believe that I should have blown out my brains the same evening. Oh, how I suffered in my early youth from the fear that I might give way and confess it to my schoolfellows. But since I grew to manhood, I have for some unknown reason become calmer, though I realised my awful characteristic more fully every year. I say "unknown," for to this day I cannot tell why it was. Perhaps it was owing to the terrible misery that was growing in my soul through something which was of more consequence than anything else about me: that something was the conviction that had come upon me that *nothing in the world mattered*. I had long had an inkling of it, but the full realisation came last year almost suddenly. I suddenly felt that it was all the same to me

whether the world existed or whether there had never been anything at all: I began to feel with all my being that there was *nothing existing*. At first I fancied that many things had existed in the past, but afterwards I guessed that there never had been anything in the past either, but that it had only seemed so for some reason. Little by little I guessed that there would be nothing in the future either. Then I left off being angry with people and almost ceased to notice them. Indeed this showed itself even in the pettiest trifles: I used, for instance, to knock against people in the street. And not so much from being lost in thought: what had I to think about? I had almost given up thinking by that time; nothing mattered to me. If at least I had solved my problems! Oh, I had not settled one of them, and how many they were! But I gave up caring about anything, and all the problems disappeared.

And it was after that that I found out the truth. I learnt the truth last November-on the third of November, to be precise-and I remember every instant since. It was a gloomy evening, one of the gloomiest possible evenings. I was going home at about eleven o'clock, and I remember that I thought that the evening could not be gloomier. Even physically. Rain had been falling all day, and it had been a cold, gloomy, almost menacing rain, with, I remember, an unmistakable spite against mankind. Suddenly between ten and eleven it had stopped, and was followed by a horrible dampness, colder and damper than the rain, and a sort of steam was rising from everything, from every stone in the street, and from every by-lane if one looked down it as far as one could. A thought suddenly occurred to me, that if all the street lamps had been put out it would have been less cheerless, that the gas made one's heart sadder because it lighted it all up. I had had scarcely any dinner that day, and had been spending the evening with an engineer, and two other friends had been there also. I sat silent-I fancy I bored them. They talked of something rousing and suddenly they got excited over it. But they did not really care, I could see that, and only made a show of being excited. I suddenly said as much to them. "My friends," I said, "you really do not care one way or the other." They were not offended, but they all laughed at me. That was because I spoke without any note of reproach, simply because it did not matter to me. They saw it did not, and it amused them.

As I was thinking about the gas lamps in the street I looked up at the sky. The sky was horribly dark, but one could distinctly see tattered clouds, and between them fathomless black patches. Suddenly I noticed in one of these patches a star, and began watching it intently. That was because that star gave

me an idea: I decided to kill myself that night. I had firmly determined to do so two months before, and poor as I was, I bought a splendid revolver that very day, and loaded it. But two months had passed and it was still lying in my drawer; I was so utterly indifferent that I wanted to seize a moment when I would not be so indifferent-why, I don't know. And so for two months every night that I came home I thought I would shoot myself. I kept waiting for the right moment. And so now this star gave me a thought. I made up my mind that it should certainly be that night. And why the star gave me the thought I don't know.

And just as I was looking at the sky, this little girl took me by the elbow. The street was empty, and there was scarcely any one to be seen. A cabman was sleeping in the distance in his cab. It was a child of eight with a kerchief on her head, wearing nothing but a wretched little dress all soaked with rain, but I noticed particularly her wet broken shoes and I recall them now. They caught my eye particularly. She suddenly pulled me by the elbow and called me. She was not weeping, but was spasmodically crying out some words which she could not utter properly, because she was shivering and shuddering all over. She was in terror about something, and kept crying, "Mammy, mammy!" I turned facing her, I did not say a word and went on; but she ran, pulling at me, and there was that note in her voice which in frightened children means despair. I know that sound. Though she did not articulate the words, I understood that her mother was dying, or that something of the sort was happening to them, and that she had run out to call some one, to find something to help her mother. I did not go with her; on the contrary, I had an impulse to drive her away. I told her first to go to a policeman. But clasping her hands, she ran beside me sobbing and gasping, and would not leave me. Then I stamped my foot, and shouted at her. She called out "Sir! sir!..." but suddenly abandoned me and rushed headlong across the road. Some other passer-by appeared there, and she evidently flew from me to him.

I mounted up to my fifth storey. I have a room in a flat where there are other lodgers. My room is small and poor, with a garret window in the shape of a semicircle. I have a sofa covered with American leather, a table with books on it, two chairs and a comfortable arm-chair, as old as old can be, but of the good old-fashioned shape. I sat down, lighted the candle, and began thinking. In the room next to mine, through the partition wall, a perfect Bedlam was going on. It had been going on for the last three days. A retired captain lived there, and he had half a dozen visitors, gentlemen of doubtful

reputation, drinking vodka and playing *stoss* with old cards. The night before there had been a fight, and I know that two of them had been for a long time engaged in dragging each other about by the hair. The landlady wanted to complain, but she was in abject terror of the captain. There was only one other lodger in the flat, a thin little regimental lady, on a visit to Petersburg, with three little children who had been taken ill since they came into the lodgings. Both she and her children were in mortal fear of the captain, and lay trembling and crossing themselves all night, and the youngest child had a sort of fit from fright. That captain, I know for a fact, sometimes stops people in the Nevsky Prospect and begs. They won't take him into the service, but strange to say (that's why I am telling this), all this month that the captain has been here his behaviour has caused me no annoyance. I have, of course, tried to avoid his acquaintance from the very beginning, and he, too, was bored with me from the first; but I never care how much they shout the other side of the partition nor how many of them there are in there: I sit up all night and forget them so completely that I do not even hear them. I stay awake till daybreak, and have been going on like that for the last year. I sit up all night in my arm-chair at the table, doing nothing. I only read by day. I sit-don't even think; ideas of a sort wander through my mind and I let them come and go as they will. A whole candle is burnt every night. I sat down quietly at the table, took out the revolver and put it down before me. When I had put it down I asked myself, I remember, "Is that so?" and answered with complete conviction, "It is." That is, I shall shoot myself. I knew that I should shoot myself that night for certain, but how much longer I should go on sitting at the table I did not know. And no doubt I should have shot myself if it had not been for that little girl.

II

You see, though nothing mattered to me, I could feel pain, for instance. If any one had struck me it would have hurt me. It was the same morally: if anything very pathetic happened, I should have felt pity just as I used to do in old days when there were things in life that did matter to me. I had felt pity that evening. I should have certainly helped a child. Why, then, had I not helped the little girl? Because of an idea that occurred to me at the time: when she was calling and pulling at me, a question suddenly arose before me and I could not settle it. The question was an idle one, but I was vexed. I was vexed at the reflection that if I were going to make an end of myself that night, nothing in life ought to have mattered to me. Why was it that all at once I did not feel that nothing mattered and was sorry for the little girl? I remember that I was very sorry for her, so much so that I felt a strange pang, quite incongruous in my position. Really I do not know better how to convey my fleeting sensation at the moment, but the sensation persisted at home when I was sitting at the table, and I was very much irritated as I had not been for a long time past. One reflection followed another. I saw clearly that so long as I was still a human being and not nothingness, I was alive and so could suffer, be angry and feel shame at my actions. So be it. But if I am going to kill myself, in two hours, say, what is the little girl to me and what have I to do with shame or with anything else in the world? I shall turn into nothing, absolutely nothing. And can it really be true that the consciousness that I shall *completely* cease to exist immediately and so everything else will cease to exist, does not in the least affect my feeling of pity for the child nor the feeling of shame after a contemptible action? I stamped and shouted at the unhappy child as though to say-not only I feel no pity, but even if I behave inhumanly and contemptibly, I am free to, for in another two hours everything will be extinguished. Do you believe that that was why I shouted that? I am almost convinced of it now. It seemed clear to me that life and the world somehow depended upon me now. I may almost say that the world now seemed created for me alone: if I shot myself the world would cease to be at least for me. I say nothing of its being likely that nothing will exist for any one when I am gone, and that as soon as my consciousness is extinguished the whole world will vanish too and become void like a phantom, as a mere appurtenance of my consciousness, for possibly all this

world and all these people are only me myself. I remember that as I sat and reflected, I turned all these new questions that swarmed one after another quite the other way, and thought of something quite new. For instance, a strange reflection suddenly occurred to me, that if I had lived before on the moon or on Mars and there had committed the most disgraceful and dishonourable action and had there been put to such shame and ignominy as one can only conceive and realise in dreams, in nightmares, and if, finding myself afterwards on earth, I were able to retain the memory of what I had done on the other planet and at the same time knew that I should never, under any circumstances, return there, then looking from the earth to the moon- *should I care or not?* Should I feel shame for that action or not? These were idle and superfluous questions for the revolver was already lying before me, and I knew in every fibre of my being that it would happen for certain, but they excited me and I raged. I could not die now without having first settled something. In short, the child had saved me, for I put off my pistol shot for the sake of these questions. Meanwhile the clamour had begun to subside in the captain's room: they had finished their game, were settling down to sleep, and meanwhile were grumbling and languidly winding up their quarrels. At that point I suddenly fell asleep in my chair at the table-a thing which had never happened to me before. I dropped asleep quite unawares.

Dreams, as we all know, are very queer things: some parts are presented with appalling vividness, with details worked up with the elaborate finish of jewellery, while others one gallops through, as it were, without noticing them at all, as, for instance, through space and time. Dreams seem to be spurred on not by reason but by desire, not by the head but by the heart, and yet what complicated tricks my reason has played sometimes in dreams, what utterly incomprehensible things happen to it! My brother died five years ago, for instance. I sometimes dream of him; he takes part in my affairs, we are very much interested, and yet all through my dream I quite know and remember that my brother is dead and buried. How is it that I am not surprised that, though he is dead, he is here beside me and working with me? Why is it that my reason fully accepts it? But enough. I will begin about my dream. Yes, I dreamed a dream, my dream of the third of November. They tease me now, telling me it was only a dream. But does it matter whether it was a dream or reality, if the dream made known to me the truth? If once one has recognised the truth and seen it, you know that it is the truth and that there is no other and there cannot be, whether you are asleep or awake. Let it be a dream, so

be it, but that real life of which you make so much I had meant to extinguish by suicide, and my dream, my dream-oh, it revealed to me a different life, renewed, grand and full of power!

Listen.

III

I have mentioned that I dropped asleep unawares and even seemed to be still reflecting on the same subjects. I suddenly dreamt that I picked up the revolver and aimed it straight at my heart-my heart, and not my head; and I had determined beforehand to fire at my head, at my right temple. After aiming at my chest I waited a second or two, and suddenly my candle, my table, and the wall in front of me began moving and heaving. I made haste to pull the trigger.

In dreams you sometimes fall from a height, or are stabbed, or beaten, but you never feel pain unless, perhaps, you really bruise yourself against the bedstead, then you feel pain and almost always wake up from it. It was the same in my dream. I did not feel any pain, but it seemed as though with my shot everything within me was shaken and everything was suddenly dimmed, and it grew horribly black around me. I seemed to be blinded and benumbed, and I was lying on something hard, stretched on my back; I saw nothing, and could not make the slightest movement. People were walking and shouting around me, the captain bawled, the landlady shrieked-and suddenly another break and I was being carried in a closed coffin. And I felt how the coffin was shaking and reflected upon it, and for the first time the idea struck me that I was dead, utterly dead, I knew it and had no doubt of it, I could neither see nor move and yet I was feeling and reflecting. But I was soon reconciled to the position, and as one usually does in a dream, accepted the facts without disputing them.

And now I was buried in the earth. They all went away, I was left alone, utterly alone. I did not move. Whenever before I had imagined being buried the one sensation I associated with the grave was that of damp and cold. So now I felt that I was very cold, especially the tips of my toes, but I felt nothing else.

I lay still, strange to say I expected nothing, accepting without dispute that a dead man had nothing to expect. But it was damp. I don't know how long a time passed-whether an hour, or several days, or many days. But all at once a drop of water fell on my closed left eye, making its way through a coffin lid; it was followed a minute later by a second, then a minute later by a third-and so on, regularly every minute. There was a sudden glow of profound indignation in my heart, and I suddenly felt in it a pang of physical

pain. "That's my wound," I thought; "that's the bullet..." And drop after drop every minute kept falling on my closed eyelid. And all at once, not with my voice, but with my whole being, I called upon the power that was responsible for all that was happening to me:

"Whoever you may be, if you exist, and if anything more rational than what is happening here is possible, suffer it to be here now. But if you are revenging yourself upon me for my senseless suicide by the hideousness and absurdity of this subsequent existence, then let me tell you that no torture could ever equal the contempt which I shall go on dumbly feeling, though my martyrdom may last a million years!"

I made this appeal and held my peace. There was a full minute of unbroken silence and again another drop fell, but I knew with infinite unshakable certainty that everything would change immediately. And behold my grave suddenly was rent asunder, that is, I don't know whether it was opened or dug up, but I was caught up by some dark and unknown being and we found ourselves in space. I suddenly regained my sight. It was the dead of night, and never, never had there been such darkness. We were flying through space far away from the earth. I did not question the being who was taking me; I was proud and waited. I assured myself that I was not afraid, and was thrilled with ecstasy at the thought that I was not afraid. I do not know how long we were flying, I cannot imagine; it happened as it always does in dreams when you skip over space and time, and the laws of thought and existence, and only pause upon the points for which the heart yearns. I remember that I suddenly saw in the darkness a star. "Is that Sirius?" I asked impulsively, though I had not meant to ask any questions.

"No, that is the star you saw between the clouds when you were coming home," the being who was carrying me replied.

I knew that it had something like a human face. Strange to say, I did not like that being, in fact I felt an intense aversion for it. I had expected complete non-existence, and that was why I had put a bullet through my heart. And here I was in the hands of a creature not human, of course, but yet living, existing. "And so there is life beyond the grave," I thought with the strange frivolity one has in dreams. But in its inmost depth my heart remained unchanged. "And if I have got to exist again," I thought, "and live once more under the control of some irresistible power, I won't be vanquished and humiliated."

"You know that I am afraid of you and despise me for that," I said

suddenly to my companion, unable to refrain from the humiliating question which implied a confession, and feeling my humiliation stab my heart as with a pin. He did not answer my question, but all at once I felt that he was not even despising me, but was laughing at me and had no compassion for me, and that our journey had an unknown and mysterious object that concerned me only. Fear was growing in my heart. Something was mutely and painfully communicated to me from my silent companion, and permeated my whole being. We were flying through dark, unknown space. I had for some time lost sight of the constellations familiar to my eyes. I knew that there were stars in the heavenly spaces the light of which took thousands or millions of years to reach the earth. Perhaps we were already flying through those spaces. I expected something with a terrible anguish that tortured my heart. And suddenly I was thrilled by a familiar feeling that stirred me to the depths: I suddenly caught sight of our sun! I knew that it could not be *our* sun, that gave life to *our* earth, and that we were an infinite distance from our sun, but for some reason I knew in my whole being that it was a sun exactly like ours, a duplicate of it. A sweet, thrilling feeling resounded with ecstasy in my heart: the kindred power of the same light which had given me light stirred an echo in my heart and awakened it, and I had a sensation of life, the old life of the past for the first time since I had been in the grave.

"But if that is the sun, if that is exactly the same as our sun," I cried, "where is the earth?"

And my companion pointed to a star twinkling in the distance with an emerald light. We were flying straight towards it.

"And are such repetitions possible in the universe? Can that be the law of Nature?... And if that is an earth there, can it be just the same earth as ours... just the same, as poor, as unhappy, but precious and beloved for ever, arousing in the most ungrateful of her children the same poignant love for her that we feel for our earth?" I cried out, shaken by irresistible, ecstatic love for the old familiar earth which I had left. The image of the poor child whom I had repulsed flashed through my mind.

"You shall see it all," answered my companion, and there was a note of sorrow in his voice.

But we were rapidly approaching the planet. It was growing before my eyes; I could already distinguish the ocean, the outline of Europe; and suddenly a feeling of a great and holy jealousy glowed in my heart.

"How can it be repeated and what for? I love and can love only that earth

which I have left, stained with my blood, when, in my ingratitude, I quenched my life with a bullet in my heart. But I have never, never ceased to love that earth, and perhaps on the very night I parted from it I loved it more than ever. Is there suffering upon this new earth? On our earth we can only love with suffering and through suffering. We cannot love otherwise, and we know of no other sort of love. I want suffering in order to love. I long, I thirst, this very instant, to kiss with tears the earth that I have left, and I don't want, I won't accept life on any other!"

But my companion had already left me. I suddenly, quite without noticing how, found myself on this other earth, in the bright light of a sunny day, fair as paradise. I believe I was standing on one of the islands that make up on our globe the Greek archipelago, or on the coast of the mainland facing that archipelago. Oh, everything was exactly as it is with us, only everything seemed to have a festive radiance, the splendour of some great, holy triumph attained at last. The caressing sea, green as emerald, splashed softly upon the shore and kissed it with manifest, almost conscious love. The tall, lovely trees stood in all the glory of their blossom, and their innumerable leaves greeted me, I am certain, with their soft, caressing rustle and seemed to articulate words of love. The grass glowed with bright and fragrant flowers. Birds were flying in flocks in the air, and perched fearlessly on my shoulders and arms and joyfully struck me with their darling, fluttering wings. And at last I saw and knew the people of this happy land. They came to me of themselves, they surrounded me, kissed me. The children of the sun, the children of their sun—oh, how beautiful they were! Never had I seen on our own earth such beauty in mankind. Only perhaps in our children, in their earliest years, one might find some remote, faint reflection of this beauty. The eyes of these happy people shone with a clear brightness. Their faces were radiant with the light of reason and fullness of a serenity that comes of perfect understanding, but those faces were gay; in their words and voices there was a note of childlike joy. Oh, from the first moment, from the first glance at them, I understood it all! It was the earth untarnished by the Fall; on it lived people who had not sinned. They lived just in such a paradise as that in which, according to all the legends of mankind, our first parents lived before they sinned; the only difference was that all this earth was the same paradise. These people, laughing joyfully, thronged round me and caressed me; they took me home with them, and each of them tried to reassure me. Oh, they asked me no questions, but they seemed, I fancied, to know everything without asking, and

they wanted to make haste and smoothe away the signs of suffering from my face.

IV

And do you know what? Well, granted that it was only a dream, yet the sensation of the love of those innocent and beautiful people has remained with me for ever, and I feel as though their love is still flowing out to me from over there. I have seen them myself, have known them and been convinced; I loved them, I suffered for them afterwards. Oh, I understood at once even at the time that in many things I could not understand them at all; as an up-to-date Russian progressive and contemptible Petersburger, it struck me as inexplicable that, knowing so much, they had, for instance, no science like ours. But I soon realised that their knowledge was gained and fostered by intuitions different from those of us on earth, and that their aspirations, too, were quite different. They desired nothing and were at peace; they did not aspire to knowledge of life as we aspire to understand it, because their lives were full. But their knowledge was higher and deeper than ours; for our science seeks to explain what life is, aspires to understand it in order to teach others how to live, while they without science knew how to live; and that I understood, but I could not understand their knowledge. They showed me their trees, and I could not understand the intense love with which they looked at them; it was as though they were talking with creatures like themselves. And perhaps I shall not be mistaken if I say that they conversed with them. Yes, they had found their language, and I am convinced that the trees understood them. They looked at all Nature like that—at the animals who lived in peace with them and did not attack them, but loved them, conquered by their love. They pointed to the stars and told me something about them which I could not understand, but I am convinced that they were somehow in touch with the stars, not only in thought, but by some living channel. Oh, these people did not persist in trying to make me understand them, they loved me without that, but I knew that they would never understand me, and so I hardly spoke to them about our earth. I only kissed in their presence the earth on which they lived and mutely worshipped them themselves. And they saw that and let me worship them without being abashed at my adoration, for they themselves loved much. They were not unhappy on my account when at times I kissed their feet with tears, joyfully conscious of the love with which they would respond to mine. At times I asked myself with wonder how it was they were able never to offend a creature like me, and never once to arouse a

feeling of jealousy or envy in me? Often I wondered how it could be that, boastful and untruthful as I was, I never talked to them of what I knew-of which, of course, they had no notion-that I was never tempted to do so by a desire to astonish or even to benefit them.

They were as gay and sportive as children. They wandered about their lovely woods and copses, they sang their lovely songs; their fare was light-the fruits of their trees, the honey from their woods, and the milk of the animals who loved them. The work they did for food and raiment was brief and not laborious. They loved and begot children, but I never noticed in them the impulse of that *cruel* sensuality which overcomes almost every man on this earth, all and each, and is the source of almost every sin of mankind on earth. They rejoiced at the arrival of children as new beings to share their happiness. There was no quarrelling, no jealousy among them, and they did not even know what the words meant. Their children were the children of all, for they all made up one family. There was scarcely any illness among them, though there was death; but their old people died peacefully, as though falling asleep, giving blessings and smiles to those who surrounded them to take their last farewell with bright and loving smiles. I never saw grief or tears on those occasions, but only love, which reached the point of ecstasy, but a calm ecstasy, made perfect and contemplative. One might think that they were still in contact with the departed after death, and that their earthly union was not cut short by death. They scarcely understood me when I questioned them about immortality, but evidently they were so convinced of it without reasoning that it was not for them a question at all. They had no temples, but they had a real living and uninterrupted sense of oneness with the whole of the universe; they had no creed, but they had a certain knowledge that when their earthly joy had reached the limits of earthly nature, then there would come for them, for the living and for the dead, a still greater fullness of contact with the whole of the universe. They looked forward to that moment with joy, but without haste, not pining for it, but seeming to have a foretaste of it in their hearts, of which they talked to one another.

In the evening before going to sleep they liked singing in musical and harmonious chorus. In those songs they expressed all the sensations that the parting day had given them, sang its glories and took leave of it. They sang the praises of nature, of the sea, of the woods. They liked making songs about one another, and praised each other like children; they were the simplest songs, but they sprang from their hearts and went to one's heart. And not only

in their songs but in all their lives they seemed to do nothing but admire one another. It was like being in love with each other, but an all-embracing, universal feeling.

Some of their songs, solemn and rapturous, I scarcely understood at all. Though I understood the words I could never fathom their full significance. It remained, as it were, beyond the grasp of my mind, yet my heart unconsciously absorbed it more and more. I often told them that I had had a presentiment of it long before, that this joy and glory had come to me on our earth in the form of a yearning melancholy that at times approached insufferable sorrow; that I had had a foreknowledge of them all and of their glory in the dreams of my heart and the visions of my mind; that often on our earth I could not look at the setting sun without tears... that in my hatred for the men of our earth there was always a yearning anguish: why could I not hate them without loving them? why could I not help forgiving them? and in my love for them there was a yearning grief: why could I not love them without hating them? They listened to me, and I saw they could not conceive what I was saying, but I did not regret that I had spoken to them of it: I knew that they understood the intensity of my yearning anguish over those whom I had left. But when they looked at me with their sweet eyes full of love, when I felt that in their presence my heart, too, became as innocent and just as theirs, the feeling of the fullness of life took my breath away, and I worshipped them in silence.

Oh, every one laughs in my face now, and assures me that one cannot dream of such details as I am telling now, that I only dreamed or felt one sensation that arose in my heart in delirium and made up the details myself when I woke up. And when I told them that perhaps it really was so, my God, how they shouted with laughter in my face, and what mirth I caused! Oh, yes, of course I was overcome by the mere sensation of my dream, and that was all that was preserved in my cruelly wounded heart; but the actual forms and images of my dream, that is, the very ones I really saw at the very time of my dream, were filled with such harmony, were so lovely and enchanting and were so actual, that on awakening I was, of course, incapable of clothing them in our poor language, so that they were bound to become blurred in my mind; and so perhaps I really was forced afterwards to make up the details, and so of course to distort them in my passionate desire to convey some at least of them as quickly as I could. But on the other hand, how can I help believing that it was all true? It was perhaps a thousand times brighter,

happier and more joyful than I describe it. Granted that I dreamed it, yet it must have been real. You know, I will tell you a secret: perhaps it was not a dream at all! For then something happened so awful, something so horribly true, that it could not have been imagined in a dream. My heart may have originated the dream, but would my heart alone have been capable of originating the awful event which happened to me afterwards? How could I alone have invented it or imagined it in my dream? Could my petty heart and my fickle, trivial mind have risen to such a revelation of truth? Oh, judge for yourselves: hitherto I have concealed it, but now I will tell the truth. The fact is that I... corrupted them all!

V

Yes, yes, it ended in my corrupting them all! How it could come to pass I do not know, but I remember it clearly. The dream embraced thousands of years and left in me only a sense of the whole. I only know that I was the cause of their sin and downfall. Like a vile trichina, like a germ of the plague infecting whole kingdoms, so I contaminated all this earth, so happy and sinless before my coming. They learnt to lie, grew fond of lying, and discovered the charm of falsehood. Oh, at first perhaps it began innocently, with a jest, coquetry, with amorous play, perhaps indeed with a germ, but that germ of falsity made its way into their hearts and pleased them. Then sensuality was soon begotten, sensuality begot jealousy, jealousy-cruelty... Oh, I don't know, I don't remember; but soon, very soon the first blood was shed. They marvelled and were horrified, and began to be split up and divided. They formed into unions, but it was against one another. Reproaches, upbraidings followed. They came to know shame, and shame brought them to virtue. The conception of honour sprang up, and every union began waving its flags. They began torturing animals, and the animals withdrew from them into the forests and became hostile to them. They began to struggle for separation, for isolation, for individuality, for mine and thine. They began to talk in different languages. They became acquainted with sorrow and loved sorrow; they thirsted for suffering, and said that truth could only be attained through suffering. Then science appeared. As they became wicked they began talking of brotherhood and humanitarianism, and understood those ideas. As they became criminal, they invented justice and drew up whole legal codes in order to observe it, and to ensure their being kept, set up a guillotine. They hardly remembered what they had lost, in fact refused to believe that they had ever been happy and innocent. They even laughed at the possibility of this happiness in the past, and called it a dream. They could not even imagine it in definite form and shape, but, strange and wonderful to relate, though they lost all faith in their past happiness and called it a legend, they so longed to be happy and innocent once more that they succumbed to this desire like children, made an idol of it, set up temples and worshipped their own idea, their own desire; though at the same time they fully believed that it was unattainable and could not be realised, yet they bowed down to it and adored it with tears! Nevertheless, if it could have

happened that they had returned to the innocent and happy condition which they had lost, and if some one had shown it to them again and had asked them whether they wanted to go back to it, they would certainly have refused. They answered me:

"We may be deceitful, wicked and unjust, we *know* it and weep over it, we grieve over it; we torment and punish ourselves more perhaps than that merciful Judge Who will judge us and whose Name we know not. But we have science, and by means of it we shall find the truth and we shall arrive at it consciously. Knowledge is higher than feeling, the consciousness of life is higher than life. Science will give us wisdom, wisdom will reveal the laws, and the knowledge of the laws of happiness is higher than happiness."

That is what they said, and after saying such things every one began to love himself better than any one else, and indeed they could not do otherwise. All became so jealous of the rights of their own personality that they did their very utmost to curtail and destroy them in others, and made that the chief thing in their lives. Slavery followed, even voluntary slavery; the weak eagerly submitted to the strong, on condition that the latter aided them to subdue the still weaker. Then there were saints who came to these people, weeping, and talked to them of their pride, of their loss of harmony and due proportion, of their loss of shame. They were laughed at or pelted with stones. Holy blood was shed on the threshold of the temples. Then there arose men who began to think how to bring all people together again, so that everybody, while still loving himself best of all, might not interfere with others, and all might live together in something like a harmonious society. Regular wars sprang up over this idea. All the combatants at the same time firmly believed that science, wisdom and the instinct of self-preservation would force men at last to unite into a harmonious and rational society; and so, meanwhile, to hasten matters, "the wise" endeavoured to exterminate as rapidly as possible all who were "not wise" and did not understand their idea, that the latter might not hinder its triumph. But the instinct of self-preservation grew rapidly weaker; there arose men, haughty and sensual, who demanded all or nothing. In order to obtain everything they resorted to crime, and if they did not succeed-to suicide. There arose religions with a cult of non-existence and self-destruction for the sake of the everlasting peace of annihilation. At last these people grew weary of their meaningless toil, and signs of suffering came into their faces, and then they proclaimed that suffering was a beauty, for in suffering alone was there meaning. They

glorified suffering in their songs. I moved about among them, wringing my hands and weeping over them, but I loved them perhaps more than in old days when there was no suffering in their faces and when they were innocent and so lovely. I loved the earth they had polluted even more than when it had been a paradise, if only because sorrow had come to it. Alas! I always loved sorrow and tribulation, but only for myself, for myself; but I wept over them, pitying them. I stretched out my hands to them in despair, blaming, cursing and despising myself. I told them that all this was my doing, mine alone; that it was I had brought them corruption, contamination and falsity. I besought them to crucify me, I taught them how to make a cross. I could not kill myself, I had not the strength, but I wanted to suffer at their hands. I yearned for suffering, I longed that my blood should be drained to the last drop in these agonies. But they only laughed at me, and began at last to look upon me as crazy. They justified me, they declared that they had only got what they wanted themselves, and that all that now was could not have been otherwise. At last they declared to me that I was becoming dangerous and that they should lock me up in a madhouse if I did not hold my tongue. Then such grief took possession of my soul that my heart was wrung, and I felt as though I were dying; and then... then I awoke.

It was morning, that is, it was not yet daylight, but about six o'clock. I woke up in the same arm-chair; my candle had burnt out; every one was asleep in the captain's room, and there was a stillness all round, rare in our flat. First of all I leapt up in great amazement: nothing like this had ever happened to me before, not even in the most trivial detail; I had never, for instance, fallen asleep like this in my arm-chair. While I was standing and coming to myself I suddenly caught sight of my revolver lying loaded, ready-but instantly I thrust it away! Oh, now, life, life! I lifted up my hands and called upon eternal truth, not with words but with tears; ecstasy, immeasurable ecstasy flooded my soul. Yes, life and spreading the good tidings! Oh, I at that moment resolved to spread the tidings, and resolved it, of course, for my whole life. I go to spread the tidings, I want to spread the tidings-of what? Of the truth, for I have seen it, have seen it with my own eyes, have seen it in all its glory.

And since then I have been preaching! Moreover I love all those who laugh at me more than any of the rest. Why that is so I do not know and cannot explain, but so be it. I am told that I am vague and confused, and if I am vague and confused now, what shall I be later on? It is true indeed: I am

vague and confused, and perhaps as time goes on I shall be more so. And of course I shall make many blunders before I find out how to preach, that is, find out what words to say, what things to do, for it is a very difficult task. I see all that as clear as daylight, but, listen, who does not make mistakes? And yet, you know, all are making for the same goal, all are striving in the same direction anyway, from the sage to the lowest robber, only by different roads. It is an old truth, but this is what is new: I cannot go far wrong. For I have seen the truth; I have seen and I know that people can be beautiful and happy without losing the power of living on earth. I will not and cannot believe that evil is the normal condition of mankind. And it is just this faith of mine that they laugh at. But how can I help believing it? I have seen the truth-it is not as though I had invented it with my mind, I have seen it, seen it, and *the living image* of it has filled my soul for ever. I have seen it in such full perfection that I cannot believe that it is impossible for people to have it. And so how can I go wrong? I shall make some slips no doubt, and shall perhaps talk in second-hand language, but not for long: the living image of what I saw will always be with me and will always correct and guide me. Oh, I am full of courage and freshness, and I will go on and on if it were for a thousand years! Do you know, at first I meant to conceal the fact that I corrupted them, but that was a mistake-that was my first mistake! But truth whispered to me that I was *lying*, and preserved me and corrected me. But how establish paradise-I don't know, because I do not know how to put it into words. After my dream I lost command of words. All the chief words, anyway, the most necessary ones. But never mind, I shall go and I shall keep talking, I won't leave off, for anyway I have seen it with my own eyes, though I cannot describe what I saw. But the scoffers do not understand that. It was a dream, they say, delirium, hallucination. Oh! As though that meant so much! And they are so proud! A dream! What is a dream? And is not our life a dream? I will say more. Suppose that this paradise will never come to pass (that I understand), yet I shall go on preaching it. And yet how simple it is: in one day, *in one hour* everything could be arranged at once! The chief thing is to love others like yourself, that's the great thing, and that's everything; nothing else is wanted-you will find out at once how to arrange it all. And yet it's an old truth which has been told and retold a billion times-but it has not formed part of our lives! The consciousness of life is higher than life, the knowledge of the laws of happiness is higher than happiness-that is what one must contend against. And I shall. If only every one wants it, it can all be arranged

at once.

And I tracked out that little girl... and I shall go on and on!

NOTES FROM THE UNDERGROUND

PART I

Underground[\[1\]](#)

I

I am a sick man... I am a spiteful man. I am an unattractive man. I believe my liver is diseased. However, I know nothing at all about my disease, and do not know for certain what ails me. I don't consult a doctor for it, and never have, though I have a respect for medicine and doctors. Besides, I am extremely superstitious, sufficiently so to respect medicine, anyway (I am well-educated enough not to be superstitious, but I am superstitious). No, I refuse to consult a doctor from spite. That you probably will not understand. Well, I understand it, though. Of course, I can't explain who it is precisely that I am mortifying in this case by my spite: I am perfectly well aware that I cannot "pay out" the doctors by not consulting them; I know better than anyone that by all this I am only injuring myself and no one else. But still, if I don't consult a doctor it is from spite. My liver is bad, well-let it get worse!

I have been going on like that for a long time-twenty years. Now I am forty. I used to be in the government service, but am no longer. I was a spiteful official. I was rude and took pleasure in being so. I did not take bribes, you see, so I was bound to find a recompense in that, at least. (A poor jest, but I will not scratch it out. I wrote it thinking it would sound very witty; but now that I have seen myself that I only wanted to show off in a despicable way, I will not scratch it out on purpose!)

When petitioners used to come for information to the table at which I sat, I used to grind my teeth at them, and felt intense enjoyment when I succeeded in making anybody unhappy. I almost did succeed. For the most part they were all timid people-of course, they were petitioners. But of the uppish ones there was one officer in particular I could not endure. He simply would not be humble, and clanked his sword in a disgusting way. I carried on a feud with him for eighteen months over that sword. At last I got the better of him. He left off clanking it. That happened in my youth, though.

But do you know, gentlemen, what was the chief point about my spite? Why, the whole point, the real sting of it lay in the fact that continually, even in the moment of the acutest spleen, I was inwardly conscious with shame that I was not only not a spiteful but not even an embittered man, that I was simply scaring sparrows at random and amusing myself by it. I might foam at the mouth, but bring me a doll to play with, give me a cup of tea with sugar in it, and maybe I should be appeased. I might even be genuinely touched,

though probably I should grind my teeth at myself afterwards and lie awake at night with shame for months after. That was my way.

I was lying when I said just now that I was a spiteful official. I was lying from spite. I was simply amusing myself with the petitioners and with the officer, and in reality I never could become spiteful. I was conscious every moment in myself of many, very many elements absolutely opposite to that. I felt them positively swarming in me, these opposite elements. I knew that they had been swarming in me all my life and craving some outlet from me, but I would not let them, would not let them, purposely would not let them come out. They tormented me till I was ashamed: they drove me to convulsions and-sickened me, at last, how they sickened me! Now, are not you fancying, gentlemen, that I am expressing remorse for something now, that I am asking your forgiveness for something? I am sure you are fancying that... However, I assure you I do not care if you are...

It was not only that I could not become spiteful, I did not know how to become anything; neither spiteful nor kind, neither a rascal nor an honest man, neither a hero nor an insect. Now, I am living out my life in my corner, taunting myself with the spiteful and useless consolation that an intelligent man cannot become anything seriously, and it is only the fool who becomes anything. Yes, a man in the nineteenth century must and morally ought to be pre-eminently a characterless creature; a man of character, an active man is pre-eminently a limited creature. That is my conviction of forty years. I am forty years old now, and you know forty years is a whole lifetime; you know it is extreme old age. To live longer than forty years is bad manners, is vulgar, immoral. Who does live beyond forty? Answer that, sincerely and honestly I will tell you who do: fools and worthless fellows. I tell all old men that to their face, all these venerable old men, all these silver-haired and reverend seniors! I tell the whole world that to its face! I have a right to say so, for I shall go on living to sixty myself. To seventy! To eighty!... Stay, let me take breath...

You imagine no doubt, gentlemen, that I want to amuse you. You are mistaken in that, too. I am by no means such a mirthful person as you imagine, or as you may imagine; however, irritated by all this babble (and I feel that you are irritated) you think fit to ask me who I am-then my answer is, I am a collegiate assessor. I was in the service that I might have something to eat (and solely for that reason), and when last year a distant relation left me six thousand roubles in his will I immediately retired from the service and

settled down in my corner. I used to live in this corner before, but now I have settled down in it. My room is a wretched, horrid one in the outskirts of the town. My servant is an old country-woman, ill-natured from stupidity, and, moreover, there is always a nasty smell about her. I am told that the Petersburg climate is bad for me, and that with my small means it is very expensive to live in Petersburg. I know all that better than all these sage and experienced counsellors and monitors... But I am remaining in Petersburg; I am not going away from Petersburg! I am not going away because... ech! Why, it is absolutely no matter whether I am going away or not going away.

But what can a decent man speak of with most pleasure?

Answer: Of himself.

Well, so I will talk about myself.

II

I want now to tell you, gentlemen, whether you care to hear it or not, why I could not even become an insect. I tell you solemnly, that I have many times tried to become an insect. But I was not equal even to that. I swear, gentlemen, that to be too conscious is an illness-a real thorough-going illness. For man's everyday needs, it would have been quite enough to have the ordinary human consciousness, that is, half or a quarter of the amount which falls to the lot of a cultivated man of our unhappy nineteenth century, especially one who has the fatal ill-luck to inhabit Petersburg, the most theoretical and intentional town on the whole terrestrial globe. (There are intentional and unintentional towns.) It would have been quite enough, for instance, to have the consciousness by which all so-called direct persons and men of action live. I bet you think I am writing all this from affectation, to be witty at the expense of men of action; and what is more, that from ill-bred affectation, I am clanking a sword like my officer. But, gentlemen, whoever can pride himself on his diseases and even swagger over them?

Though, after all, everyone does do that; people do pride themselves on their diseases, and I do, may be, more than anyone. We will not dispute it; my contention was absurd. But yet I am firmly persuaded that a great deal of consciousness, every sort of consciousness, in fact, is a disease. I stick to that. Let us leave that, too, for a minute. Tell me this: why does it happen that at the very, yes, at the very moments when I am most capable of feeling every refinement of all that is "sublime and beautiful," as they used to say at one time, it would, as though of design, happen to me not only to feel but to do such ugly things, such that... Well, in short, actions that all, perhaps, commit; but which, as though purposely, occurred to me at the very time when I was most conscious that they ought not to be committed. The more conscious I was of goodness and of all that was "sublime and beautiful," the more deeply I sank into my mire and the more ready I was to sink in it altogether. But the chief point was that all this was, as it were, not accidental in me, but as though it were bound to be so. It was as though it were my most normal condition, and not in the least disease or depravity, so that at last all desire in me to struggle against this depravity passed. It ended by my almost believing (perhaps actually believing) that this was perhaps my normal condition. But at first, in the beginning, what agonies I endured in that struggle! I did not

believe it was the same with other people, and all my life I hid this fact about myself as a secret. I was ashamed (even now, perhaps, I am ashamed): I got to the point of feeling a sort of secret abnormal, despicable enjoyment in returning home to my corner on some disgusting Petersburg night, acutely conscious that that day I had committed a loathsome action again, that what was done could never be undone, and secretly, inwardly gnawing, gnawing at myself for it, tearing and consuming myself till at last the bitterness turned into a sort of shameful accursed sweetness, and at last-into positive real enjoyment! Yes, into enjoyment, into enjoyment! I insist upon that. I have spoken of this because I keep wanting to know for a fact whether other people feel such enjoyment? I will explain; the enjoyment was just from the too intense consciousness of one's own degradation; it was from feeling oneself that one had reached the last barrier, that it was horrible, but that it could not be otherwise; that there was no escape for you; that you never could become a different man; that even if time and faith were still left you to change into something different you would most likely not wish to change; or if you did wish to, even then you would do nothing; because perhaps in reality there was nothing for you to change into.

And the worst of it was, and the root of it all, that it was all in accord with the normal fundamental laws of over-acute consciousness, and with the inertia that was the direct result of those laws, and that consequently one was not only unable to change but could do absolutely nothing. Thus it would follow, as the result of acute consciousness, that one is not to blame in being a scoundrel; as though that were any consolation to the scoundrel once he has come to realise that he actually is a scoundrel. But enough... Ech, I have talked a lot of nonsense, but what have I explained? How is enjoyment in this to be explained? But I will explain it. I will get to the bottom of it! That is why I have taken up my pen...

I, for instance, have a great deal of AMOUR PROPRE. I am as suspicious and prone to take offence as a humpback or a dwarf. But upon my word I sometimes have had moments when if I had happened to be slapped in the face I should, perhaps, have been positively glad of it. I say, in earnest, that I should probably have been able to discover even in that a peculiar sort of enjoyment-the enjoyment, of course, of despair; but in despair there are the most intense enjoyments, especially when one is very acutely conscious of the hopelessness of one's position. And when one is slapped in the face-why then the consciousness of being rubbed into a pulp would positively

overwhelm one. The worst of it is, look at it which way one will, it still turns out that I was always the most to blame in everything. And what is most humiliating of all, to blame for no fault of my own but, so to say, through the laws of nature. In the first place, to blame because I am cleverer than any of the people surrounding me. (I have always considered myself cleverer than any of the people surrounding me, and sometimes, would you believe it, have been positively ashamed of it. At any rate, I have all my life, as it were, turned my eyes away and never could look people straight in the face.) To blame, finally, because even if I had had magnanimity, I should only have had more suffering from the sense of its uselessness. I should certainly have never been able to do anything from being magnanimous-neither to forgive, for my assailant would perhaps have slapped me from the laws of nature, and one cannot forgive the laws of nature; nor to forget, for even if it were owing to the laws of nature, it is insulting all the same. Finally, even if I had wanted to be anything but magnanimous, had desired on the contrary to revenge myself on my assailant, I could not have revenged myself on any one for anything because I should certainly never have made up my mind to do anything, even if I had been able to. Why should I not have made up my mind? About that in particular I want to say a few words.

III

With people who know how to revenge themselves and to stand up for themselves in general, how is it done? Why, when they are possessed, let us suppose, by the feeling of revenge, then for the time there is nothing else but that feeling left in their whole being. Such a gentleman simply dashes straight for his object like an infuriated bull with its horns down, and nothing but a wall will stop him. (By the way: facing the wall, such gentlemen-that is, the "direct" persons and men of action-are genuinely nonplussed. For them a wall is not an evasion, as for us people who think and consequently do nothing; it is not an excuse for turning aside, an excuse for which we are always very glad, though we scarcely believe in it ourselves, as a rule. No, they are nonplussed in all sincerity. The wall has for them something tranquillising, morally soothing, final-maybe even something mysterious... but of the wall later.)

Well, such a direct person I regard as the real normal man, as his tender mother nature wished to see him when she graciously brought him into being on the earth. I envy such a man till I am green in the face. He is stupid. I am not disputing that, but perhaps the normal man should be stupid, how do you know? Perhaps it is very beautiful, in fact. And I am the more persuaded of that suspicion, if one can call it so, by the fact that if you take, for instance, the antithesis of the normal man, that is, the man of acute consciousness, who has come, of course, not out of the lap of nature but out of a retort (this is almost mysticism, gentlemen, but I suspect this, too), this retort-made man is sometimes so nonplussed in the presence of his antithesis that with all his exaggerated consciousness he genuinely thinks of himself as a mouse and not a man. It may be an acutely conscious mouse, yet it is a mouse, while the other is a man, and therefore, et caetera, et caetera. And the worst of it is, he himself, his very own self, looks on himself as a mouse; no one asks him to do so; and that is an important point. Now let us look at this mouse in action. Let us suppose, for instance, that it feels insulted, too (and it almost always does feel insulted), and wants to revenge itself, too. There may even be a greater accumulation of spite in it than in L'HOMME DE LA NATURE ET DE LA VERITE. The base and nasty desire to vent that spite on its assailant rankles perhaps even more nastily in it than in L'HOMME DE LA NATURE ET DE LA VERITE. For through his innate stupidity the latter looks upon his

revenge as justice pure and simple; while in consequence of his acute consciousness the mouse does not believe in the justice of it. To come at last to the deed itself, to the very act of revenge. Apart from the one fundamental nastiness the luckless mouse succeeds in creating around it so many other nastinesses in the form of doubts and questions, adds to the one question so many unsettled questions that there inevitably works up around it a sort of fatal brew, a stinking mess, made up of its doubts, emotions, and of the contempt spat upon it by the direct men of action who stand solemnly about it as judges and arbitrators, laughing at it till their healthy sides ache. Of course the only thing left for it is to dismiss all that with a wave of its paw, and, with a smile of assumed contempt in which it does not even itself believe, creep ignominiously into its mouse-hole. There in its nasty, stinking, underground home our insulted, crushed and ridiculed mouse promptly becomes absorbed in cold, malignant and, above all, everlasting spite. For forty years together it will remember its injury down to the smallest, most ignominious details, and every time will add, of itself, details still more ignominious, spitefully teasing and tormenting itself with its own imagination. It will itself be ashamed of its imaginings, but yet it will recall it all, it will go over and over every detail, it will invent unheard of things against itself, pretending that those things might happen, and will forgive nothing. Maybe it will begin to revenge itself, too, but, as it were, piecemeal, in trivial ways, from behind the stove, incognito, without believing either in its own right to vengeance, or in the success of its revenge, knowing that from all its efforts at revenge it will suffer a hundred times more than he on whom it revenges itself, while he, I daresay, will not even scratch himself. On its deathbed it will recall it all over again, with interest accumulated over all the years and...

But it is just in that cold, abominable half despair, half belief, in that conscious burying oneself alive for grief in the underworld for forty years, in that acutely recognised and yet partly doubtful hopelessness of one's position, in that hell of unsatisfied desires turned inward, in that fever of oscillations, of resolutions determined for ever and repented of again a minute later-that the savour of that strange enjoyment of which I have spoken lies. It is so subtle, so difficult of analysis, that persons who are a little limited, or even simply persons of strong nerves, will not understand a single atom of it. "Possibly," you will add on your own account with a grin, "people will not understand it either who have never received a slap in the face," and in that way you will politely hint to me that I, too, perhaps, have had the experience

of a slap in the face in my life, and so I speak as one who knows. I bet that you are thinking that. But set your minds at rest, gentlemen, I have not received a slap in the face, though it is absolutely a matter of indifference to me what you may think about it. Possibly, I even regret, myself, that I have given so few slaps in the face during my life. But enough... not another word on that subject of such extreme interest to you.

I will continue calmly concerning persons with strong nerves who do not understand a certain refinement of enjoyment. Though in certain circumstances these gentlemen bellow their loudest like bulls, though this, let us suppose, does them the greatest credit, yet, as I have said already, confronted with the impossible they subside at once. The impossible means the stone wall! What stone wall? Why, of course, the laws of nature, the deductions of natural science, mathematics. As soon as they prove to you, for instance, that you are descended from a monkey, then it is no use scowling, accept it for a fact. When they prove to you that in reality one drop of your own fat must be dearer to you than a hundred thousand of your fellow-creatures, and that this conclusion is the final solution of all so-called virtues and duties and all such prejudices and fancies, then you have just to accept it, there is no help for it, for twice two is a law of mathematics. Just try refuting it.

"Upon my word, they will shout at you, it is no use protesting: it is a case of twice two makes four! Nature does not ask your permission, she has nothing to do with your wishes, and whether you like her laws or dislike them, you are bound to accept her as she is, and consequently all her conclusions. A wall, you see, is a wall... and so on, and so on."

Merciful Heavens! but what do I care for the laws of nature and arithmetic, when, for some reason I dislike those laws and the fact that twice two makes four? Of course I cannot break through the wall by battering my head against it if I really have not the strength to knock it down, but I am not going to be reconciled to it simply because it is a stone wall and I have not the strength.

As though such a stone wall really were a consolation, and really did contain some word of conciliation, simply because it is as true as twice two makes four. Oh, absurdity of absurdities! How much better it is to understand it all, to recognise it all, all the impossibilities and the stone wall; not to be reconciled to one of those impossibilities and stone walls if it disgusts you to be reconciled to it; by the way of the most inevitable, logical combinations to

reach the most revolting conclusions on the everlasting theme, that even for the stone wall you are yourself somehow to blame, though again it is as clear as day you are not to blame in the least, and therefore grinding your teeth in silent impotence to sink into luxurious inertia, brooding on the fact that there is no one even for you to feel vindictive against, that you have not, and perhaps never will have, an object for your spite, that it is a sleight of hand, a bit of juggling, a card-sharper's trick, that it is simply a mess, no knowing what and no knowing who, but in spite of all these uncertainties and jugglings, still there is an ache in you, and the more you do not know, the worse the ache.

IV

"Ha, ha, ha! You will be finding enjoyment in toothache next," you cry, with a laugh.

"Well, even in toothache there is enjoyment," I answer. I had toothache for a whole month and I know there is. In that case, of course, people are not spiteful in silence, but moan; but they are not candid moans, they are malignant moans, and the malignancy is the whole point. The enjoyment of the sufferer finds expression in those moans; if he did not feel enjoyment in them he would not moan. It is a good example, gentlemen, and I will develop it. Those moans express in the first place all the aimlessness of your pain, which is so humiliating to your consciousness; the whole legal system of nature on which you spit disdainfully, of course, but from which you suffer all the same while she does not. They express the consciousness that you have no enemy to punish, but that you have pain; the consciousness that in spite of all possible Wagenheims you are in complete slavery to your teeth; that if someone wishes it, your teeth will leave off aching, and if he does not, they will go on aching another three months; and that finally if you are still contumacious and still protest, all that is left you for your own gratification is to thrash yourself or beat your wall with your fist as hard as you can, and absolutely nothing more. Well, these mortal insults, these jeers on the part of someone unknown, end at last in an enjoyment which sometimes reaches the highest degree of voluptuousness. I ask you, gentlemen, listen sometimes to the moans of an educated man of the nineteenth century suffering from toothache, on the second or third day of the attack, when he is beginning to moan, not as he moaned on the first day, that is, not simply because he has toothache, not just as any coarse peasant, but as a man affected by progress and European civilisation, a man who is "divorced from the soil and the national elements," as they express it now-a-days. His moans become nasty, disgustingly malignant, and go on for whole days and nights. And of course he knows himself that he is doing himself no sort of good with his moans; he knows better than anyone that he is only lacerating and harassing himself and others for nothing; he knows that even the audience before whom he is making his efforts, and his whole family, listen to him with loathing, do not put a ha'porth of faith in him, and inwardly understand that he might moan differently, more simply, without trills and flourishes, and that he is only

amusing himself like that from ill-humour, from malignancy. Well, in all these recognitions and disgraces it is that there lies a voluptuous pleasure. As though he would say: "I am worrying you, I am lacerating your hearts, I am keeping everyone in the house awake. Well, stay awake then, you, too, feel every minute that I have toothache. I am not a hero to you now, as I tried to seem before, but simply a nasty person, an impostor. Well, so be it, then! I am very glad that you see through me. It is nasty for you to hear my despicable moans: well, let it be nasty; here I will let you have a nastier flourish in a minute..." You do not understand even now, gentlemen? No, it seems our development and our consciousness must go further to understand all the intricacies of this pleasure. You laugh? Delighted. My jests, gentlemen, are of course in bad taste, jerky, involved, lacking self-confidence. But of course that is because I do not respect myself. Can a man of perception respect himself at all?

Come, can a man who attempts to find enjoyment in the very feeling of his own degradation possibly have a spark of respect for himself? I am not saying this now from any mawkish kind of remorse. And, indeed, I could never endure saying, "Forgive me, Papa, I won't do it again," not because I am incapable of saying that-on the contrary, perhaps just because I have been too capable of it, and in what a way, too. As though of design I used to get into trouble in cases when I was not to blame in any way. That was the nastiest part of it. At the same time I was genuinely touched and penitent, I used to shed tears and, of course, deceived myself, though I was not acting in the least and there was a sick feeling in my heart at the time... For that one could not blame even the laws of nature, though the laws of nature have continually all my life offended me more than anything. It is loathsome to remember it all, but it was loathsome even then. Of course, a minute or so later I would realise wrathfully that it was all a lie, a revolting lie, an affected lie, that is, all this penitence, this emotion, these vows of reform. You will ask why did I worry myself with such antics: answer, because it was very dull to sit with one's hands folded, and so one began cutting capers. That is really it. Observe yourselves more carefully, gentlemen, then you will understand that it is so. I invented adventures for myself and made up a life, so as at least to live in some way. How many times it has happened to me-well, for instance, to take offence simply on purpose, for nothing; and one knows oneself, of course, that one is offended at nothing; that one is putting it on, but yet one brings oneself at last to the point of being really offended. All my life I have had an impulse to play such pranks, so that in the end I could not control it in myself. Another time, twice, in fact, I tried hard to be in love. I suffered, too, gentlemen, I assure you. In the depth of my heart there was no faith in my suffering, only a faint stir of mockery, but yet I did suffer, and in the real, orthodox way; I was jealous, beside myself... and it was all from ENNUI, gentlemen, all from ENNUI; inertia overcame me. You know the direct, legitimate fruit of consciousness is inertia, that is, conscious sitting-with-the-hands-folded. I have referred to this already. I repeat, I repeat with emphasis: all "direct" persons and men of action are active just because they are stupid and limited. How explain that? I will tell you: in consequence of their limitation they take immediate and secondary causes for primary ones,

and in that way persuade themselves more quickly and easily than other people do that they have found an infallible foundation for their activity, and their minds are at ease and you know that is the chief thing. To begin to act, you know, you must first have your mind completely at ease and no trace of doubt left in it. Why, how am I, for example, to set my mind at rest? Where are the primary causes on which I am to build? Where are my foundations? Where am I to get them from? I exercise myself in reflection, and consequently with me every primary cause at once draws after itself another still more primary, and so on to infinity. That is just the essence of every sort of consciousness and reflection. It must be a case of the laws of nature again. What is the result of it in the end? Why, just the same. Remember I spoke just now of vengeance. (I am sure you did not take it in.) I said that a man revenges himself because he sees justice in it. Therefore he has found a primary cause, that is, justice. And so he is at rest on all sides, and consequently he carries out his revenge calmly and successfully, being persuaded that he is doing a just and honest thing. But I see no justice in it, I find no sort of virtue in it either, and consequently if I attempt to revenge myself, it is only out of spite. Spite, of course, might overcome everything, all my doubts, and so might serve quite successfully in place of a primary cause, precisely because it is not a cause. But what is to be done if I have not even spite (I began with that just now, you know). In consequence again of those accursed laws of consciousness, anger in me is subject to chemical disintegration. You look into it, the object flies off into air, your reasons evaporate, the criminal is not to be found, the wrong becomes not a wrong but a phantom, something like the toothache, for which no one is to blame, and consequently there is only the same outlet left again—that is, to beat the wall as hard as you can. So you give it up with a wave of the hand because you have not found a fundamental cause. And try letting yourself be carried away by your feelings, blindly, without reflection, without a primary cause, repelling consciousness at least for a time; hate or love, if only not to sit with your hands folded. The day after tomorrow, at the latest, you will begin despising yourself for having knowingly deceived yourself. Result: a soap-bubble and inertia. Oh, gentlemen, do you know, perhaps I consider myself an intelligent man, only because all my life I have been able neither to begin nor to finish anything. Granted I am a babbler, a harmless vexatious babbler, like all of us. But what is to be done if the direct and sole vocation of every intelligent man is babble, that is, the intentional pouring of water through a

sieve?

VI

Oh, if I had done nothing simply from laziness! Heavens, how I should have respected myself, then. I should have respected myself because I should at least have been capable of being lazy; there would at least have been one quality, as it were, positive in me, in which I could have believed myself. Question: What is he? Answer: A sluggard; how very pleasant it would have been to hear that of oneself! It would mean that I was positively defined, it would mean that there was something to say about me. "Sluggard"-why, it is a calling and vocation, it is a career. Do not jest, it is so. I should then be a member of the best club by right, and should find my occupation in continually respecting myself. I knew a gentleman who prided himself all his life on being a connoisseur of Lafitte. He considered this as his positive virtue, and never doubted himself. He died, not simply with a tranquil, but with a triumphant conscience, and he was quite right, too. Then I should have chosen a career for myself, I should have been a sluggard and a glutton, not a simple one, but, for instance, one with sympathies for everything sublime and beautiful. How do you like that? I have long had visions of it. That "sublime and beautiful" weighs heavily on my mind at forty But that is at forty; then-oh, then it would have been different! I should have found for myself a form of activity in keeping with it, to be precise, drinking to the health of everything "sublime and beautiful." I should have snatched at every opportunity to drop a tear into my glass and then to drain it to all that is "sublime and beautiful." I should then have turned everything into the sublime and the beautiful; in the nastiest, unquestionable trash, I should have sought out the sublime and the beautiful. I should have exuded tears like a wet sponge. An artist, for instance, paints a picture worthy of Gay. At once I drink to the health of the artist who painted the picture worthy of Gay, because I love all that is "sublime and beautiful." An author has written AS YOU WILL: at once I drink to the health of "anyone you will" because I love all that is "sublime and beautiful."

I should claim respect for doing so. I should persecute anyone who would not show me respect. I should live at ease, I should die with dignity, why, it is charming, perfectly charming! And what a good round belly I should have grown, what a treble chin I should have established, what a ruby nose I should have coloured for myself, so that everyone would have said, looking

at me: "Here is an asset! Here is something real and solid!" And, say what you like, it is very agreeable to hear such remarks about oneself in this negative age.

VII

But these are all golden dreams. Oh, tell me, who was it first announced, who was it first proclaimed, that man only does nasty things because he does not know his own interests; and that if he were enlightened, if his eyes were opened to his real normal interests, man would at once cease to do nasty things, would at once become good and noble because, being enlightened and understanding his real advantage, he would see his own advantage in the good and nothing else, and we all know that not one man can, consciously, act against his own interests, consequently, so to say, through necessity, he would begin doing good? Oh, the babe! Oh, the pure, innocent child! Why, in the first place, when in all these thousands of years has there been a time when man has acted only from his own interest? What is to be done with the millions of facts that bear witness that men, CONSCIOUSLY, that is fully understanding their real interests, have left them in the background and have rushed headlong on another path, to meet peril and danger, compelled to this course by nobody and by nothing, but, as it were, simply disliking the beaten track, and have obstinately, wilfully, struck out another difficult, absurd way, seeking it almost in the darkness. So, I suppose, this obstinacy and perversity were pleasanter to them than any advantage... Advantage! What is advantage? And will you take it upon yourself to define with perfect accuracy in what the advantage of man consists? And what if it so happens that a man's advantage, SOMETIMES, not only may, but even must, consist in his desiring in certain cases what is harmful to himself and not advantageous. And if so, if there can be such a case, the whole principle falls into dust. What do you think-are there such cases? You laugh; laugh away, gentlemen, but only answer me: have man's advantages been reckoned up with perfect certainty? Are there not some which not only have not been included but cannot possibly be included under any classification? You see, you gentlemen have, to the best of my knowledge, taken your whole register of human advantages from the averages of statistical figures and politico-economical formulas. Your advantages are prosperity, wealth, freedom, peace-and so on, and so on. So that the man who should, for instance, go openly and knowingly in opposition to all that list would to your thinking, and indeed mine, too, of course, be an obscurantist or an absolute madman: would not he? But, you know, this is what is surprising: why does it so

happen that all these statisticians, sages and lovers of humanity, when they reckon up human advantages invariably leave out one? They don't even take it into their reckoning in the form in which it should be taken, and the whole reckoning depends upon that. It would be no greater matter, they would simply have to take it, this advantage, and add it to the list. But the trouble is, that this strange advantage does not fall under any classification and is not in place in any list. I have a friend for instance... Ech! gentlemen, but of course he is your friend, too; and indeed there is no one, no one to whom he is not a friend! When he prepares for any undertaking this gentleman immediately explains to you, elegantly and clearly, exactly how he must act in accordance with the laws of reason and truth. What is more, he will talk to you with excitement and passion of the true normal interests of man; with irony he will upbraid the short-sighted fools who do not understand their own interests, nor the true significance of virtue; and, within a quarter of an hour, without any sudden outside provocation, but simply through something inside him which is stronger than all his interests, he will go off on quite a different tack-that is, act in direct opposition to what he has just been saying about himself, in opposition to the laws of reason, in opposition to his own advantage, in fact in opposition to everything... I warn you that my friend is a compound personality and therefore it is difficult to blame him as an individual. The fact is, gentlemen, it seems there must really exist something that is dearer to almost every man than his greatest advantages, or (not to be illogical) there is a most advantageous advantage (the very one omitted of which we spoke just now) which is more important and more advantageous than all other advantages, for the sake of which a man if necessary is ready to act in opposition to all laws; that is, in opposition to reason, honour, peace, prosperity-in fact, in opposition to all those excellent and useful things if only he can attain that fundamental, most advantageous advantage which is dearer to him than all. "Yes, but it's advantage all the same," you will retort. But excuse me, I'll make the point clear, and it is not a case of playing upon words. What matters is, that this advantage is remarkable from the very fact that it breaks down all our classifications, and continually shatters every system constructed by lovers of mankind for the benefit of mankind. In fact, it upsets everything. But before I mention this advantage to you, I want to compromise myself personally, and therefore I boldly declare that all these fine systems, all these theories for explaining to mankind their real normal interests, in order that inevitably striving to pursue these interests they may at

once become good and noble-are, in my opinion, so far, mere logical exercises! Yes, logical exercises. Why, to maintain this theory of the regeneration of mankind by means of the pursuit of his own advantage is to my mind almost the same thing... as to affirm, for instance, following Buckle, that through civilisation mankind becomes softer, and consequently less bloodthirsty and less fitted for warfare. Logically it does seem to follow from his arguments. But man has such a predilection for systems and abstract deductions that he is ready to distort the truth intentionally, he is ready to deny the evidence of his senses only to justify his logic. I take this example because it is the most glaring instance of it. Only look about you: blood is being spilt in streams, and in the merriest way, as though it were champagne. Take the whole of the nineteenth century in which Buckle lived. Take Napoleon-the Great and also the present one. Take North America-the eternal union. Take the farce of Schleswig-Holstein... And what is it that civilisation softens in us? The only gain of civilisation for mankind is the greater capacity for variety of sensations-and absolutely nothing more. And through the development of this many-sidedness man may come to finding enjoyment in bloodshed. In fact, this has already happened to him. Have you noticed that it is the most civilised gentlemen who have been the subtlest slaughterers, to whom the Attilas and Stenka Razins could not hold a candle, and if they are not so conspicuous as the Attilas and Stenka Razins it is simply because they are so often met with, are so ordinary and have become so familiar to us. In any case civilisation has made mankind if not more bloodthirsty, at least more vilely, more loathsomely bloodthirsty. In old days he saw justice in bloodshed and with his conscience at peace exterminated those he thought proper. Now we do think bloodshed abominable and yet we engage in this abomination, and with more energy than ever. Which is worse? Decide that for yourselves. They say that Cleopatra (excuse an instance from Roman history) was fond of sticking gold pins into her slave-girls' breasts and derived gratification from their screams and writhings. You will say that that was in the comparatively barbarous times; that these are barbarous times too, because also, comparatively speaking, pins are stuck in even now; that though man has now learned to see more clearly than in barbarous ages, he is still far from having learnt to act as reason and science would dictate. But yet you are fully convinced that he will be sure to learn when he gets rid of certain old bad habits, and when common sense and science have completely re-educated human nature and turned it in a normal direction. You are

confident that then man will cease from INTENTIONAL error and will, so to say, be compelled not to want to set his will against his normal interests. That is not all; then, you say, science itself will teach man (though to my mind it's a superfluous luxury) that he never has really had any caprice or will of his own, and that he himself is something of the nature of a piano-key or the stop of an organ, and that there are, besides, things called the laws of nature; so that everything he does is not done by his willing it, but is done of itself, by the laws of nature. Consequently we have only to discover these laws of nature, and man will no longer have to answer for his actions and life will become exceedingly easy for him. All human actions will then, of course, be tabulated according to these laws, mathematically, like tables of logarithms up to 108,000, and entered in an index; or, better still, there would be published certain edifying works of the nature of encyclopaedic lexicons, in which everything will be so clearly calculated and explained that there will be no more incidents or adventures in the world.

Then-this is all what you say-new economic relations will be established, all ready-made and worked out with mathematical exactitude, so that every possible question will vanish in the twinkling of an eye, simply because every possible answer to it will be provided. Then the "Palace of Crystal" will be built. Then... In fact, those will be halcyon days. Of course there is no guaranteeing (this is my comment) that it will not be, for instance, frightfully dull then (for what will one have to do when everything will be calculated and tabulated), but on the other hand everything will be extraordinarily rational. Of course boredom may lead you to anything. It is boredom sets one sticking golden pins into people, but all that would not matter. What is bad (this is my comment again) is that I dare say people will be thankful for the gold pins then. Man is stupid, you know, phenomenally stupid; or rather he is not at all stupid, but he is so ungrateful that you could not find another like him in all creation. I, for instance, would not be in the least surprised if all of a sudden, A PROPOS of nothing, in the midst of general prosperity a gentleman with an ignoble, or rather with a reactionary and ironical, countenance were to arise and, putting his arms akimbo, say to us all: "I say, gentleman, hadn't we better kick over the whole show and scatter rationalism to the winds, simply to send these logarithms to the devil, and to enable us to live once more at our own sweet foolish will!" That again would not matter, but what is annoying is that he would be sure to find followers-such is the nature of man. And all that for the most foolish reason, which, one would

think, was hardly worth mentioning: that is, that man everywhere and at all times, whoever he may be, has preferred to act as he chose and not in the least as his reason and advantage dictated. And one may choose what is contrary to one's own interests, and sometimes one POSITIVELY OUGHT (that is my idea). One's own free unfettered choice, one's own caprice, however wild it may be, one's own fancy worked up at times to frenzy-is that very "most advantageous advantage" which we have overlooked, which comes under no classification and against which all systems and theories are continually being shattered to atoms. And how do these wiseacres know that man wants a normal, a virtuous choice? What has made them conceive that man must want a rationally advantageous choice? What man wants is simply INDEPENDENT choice, whatever that independence may cost and wherever it may lead. And choice, of course, the devil only knows what choice.

VIII

"Ha! ha! ha! But you know there is no such thing as choice in reality, say what you like," you will interpose with a chuckle. "Science has succeeded in so far analysing man that we know already that choice and what is called freedom of will is nothing else than-"

Stay, gentlemen, I meant to begin with that myself I confess, I was rather frightened. I was just going to say that the devil only knows what choice depends on, and that perhaps that was a very good thing, but I remembered the teaching of science... and pulled myself up. And here you have begun upon it. Indeed, if there really is some day discovered a formula for all our desires and caprices-that is, an explanation of what they depend upon, by what laws they arise, how they develop, what they are aiming at in one case and in another and so on, that is a real mathematical formula-then, most likely, man will at once cease to feel desire, indeed, he will be certain to. For who would want to choose by rule? Besides, he will at once be transformed from a human being into an organ-stop or something of the sort; for what is a man without desires, without free will and without choice, if not a stop in an organ? What do you think? Let us reckon the chances-can such a thing happen or not?

"H'm!" you decide. "Our choice is usually mistaken from a false view of our advantage. We sometimes choose absolute nonsense because in our foolishness we see in that nonsense the easiest means for attaining a supposed advantage. But when all that is explained and worked out on paper (which is perfectly possible, for it is contemptible and senseless to suppose that some laws of nature man will never understand), then certainly so-called desires will no longer exist. For if a desire should come into conflict with reason we shall then reason and not desire, because it will be impossible retaining our reason to be SENSELESS in our desires, and in that way knowingly act against reason and desire to injure ourselves. And as all choice and reasoning can be really calculated-because there will some day be discovered the laws of our so-called free will-so, joking apart, there may one day be something like a table constructed of them, so that we really shall choose in accordance with it. If, for instance, some day they calculate and prove to me that I made a long nose at someone because I could not help making a long nose at him and that I had to do it in that particular way, what FREEDOM is left me,

especially if I am a learned man and have taken my degree somewhere? Then I should be able to calculate my whole life for thirty years beforehand. In short, if this could be arranged there would be nothing left for us to do; anyway, we should have to understand that. And, in fact, we ought unwearingly to repeat to ourselves that at such and such a time and in such and such circumstances nature does not ask our leave; that we have got to take her as she is and not fashion her to suit our fancy, and if we really aspire to formulas and tables of rules, and well, even... to the chemical retort, there's no help for it, we must accept the retort too, or else it will be accepted without our consent..."

Yes, but here I come to a stop! Gentlemen, you must excuse me for being over-philosophical; it's the result of forty years underground! Allow me to indulge my fancy. You see, gentlemen, reason is an excellent thing, there's no disputing that, but reason is nothing but reason and satisfies only the rational side of man's nature, while will is a manifestation of the whole life, that is, of the whole human life including reason and all the impulses. And although our life, in this manifestation of it, is often worthless, yet it is life and not simply extracting square roots. Here I, for instance, quite naturally want to live, in order to satisfy all my capacities for life, and not simply my capacity for reasoning, that is, not simply one twentieth of my capacity for life. What does reason know? Reason only knows what it has succeeded in learning (some things, perhaps, it will never learn; this is a poor comfort, but why not say so frankly?) and human nature acts as a whole, with everything that is in it, consciously or unconsciously, and, even if it goes wrong, it lives. I suspect, gentlemen, that you are looking at me with compassion; you tell me again that an enlightened and developed man, such, in short, as the future man will be, cannot consciously desire anything disadvantageous to himself, that that can be proved mathematically. I thoroughly agree, it can-by mathematics. But I repeat for the hundredth time, there is one case, one only, when man may consciously, purposely, desire what is injurious to himself, what is stupid, very stupid-simply in order to have the right to desire for himself even what is very stupid and not to be bound by an obligation to desire only what is sensible. Of course, this very stupid thing, this caprice of ours, may be in reality, gentlemen, more advantageous for us than anything else on earth, especially in certain cases. And in particular it may be more advantageous than any advantage even when it does us obvious harm, and contradicts the soundest conclusions of our reason concerning our advantage-for in any

circumstances it preserves for us what is most precious and most important—that is, our personality, our individuality. Some, you see, maintain that this really is the most precious thing for mankind; choice can, of course, if it chooses, be in agreement with reason; and especially if this be not abused but kept within bounds. It is profitable and sometimes even praiseworthy. But very often, and even most often, choice is utterly and stubbornly opposed to reason... and... and... do you know that that, too, is profitable, sometimes even praiseworthy? Gentlemen, let us suppose that man is not stupid. (Indeed one cannot refuse to suppose that, if only from the one consideration, that, if man is stupid, then who is wise?) But if he is not stupid, he is monstrously ungrateful! Phenomenally ungrateful. In fact, I believe that the best definition of man is the ungrateful biped. But that is not all, that is not his worst defect; his worst defect is his perpetual moral obliquity, perpetual—from the days of the Flood to the Schleswig-Holstein period. Moral obliquity and consequently lack of good sense; for it has long been accepted that lack of good sense is due to no other cause than moral obliquity. Put it to the test and cast your eyes upon the history of mankind. What will you see? Is it a grand spectacle? Grand, if you like. Take the Colossus of Rhodes, for instance, that's worth something. With good reason Mr. Anaeusky testifies of it that some say that it is the work of man's hands, while others maintain that it has been created by nature herself. Is it many-coloured? May be it is many-coloured, too: if one takes the dress uniforms, military and civilian, of all peoples in all ages—that alone is worth something, and if you take the undress uniforms you will never get to the end of it; no historian would be equal to the job. Is it monotonous? May be it's monotonous too: it's fighting and fighting; they are fighting now, they fought first and they fought last—you will admit, that it is almost too monotonous. In short, one may say anything about the history of the world—anything that might enter the most disordered imagination. The only thing one can't say is that it's rational. The very word sticks in one's throat. And, indeed, this is the odd thing that is continually happening: there are continually turning up in life moral and rational persons, sages and lovers of humanity who make it their object to live all their lives as morally and rationally as possible, to be, so to speak, a light to their neighbours simply in order to show them that it is possible to live morally and rationally in this world. And yet we all know that those very people sooner or later have been false to themselves, playing some queer trick, often a most unseemly one. Now I ask you: what can be expected of man since he

is a being endowed with strange qualities? Shower upon him every earthly blessing, drown him in a sea of happiness, so that nothing but bubbles of bliss can be seen on the surface; give him economic prosperity, such that he should have nothing else to do but sleep, eat cakes and busy himself with the continuation of his species, and even then out of sheer ingratitude, sheer spite, man would play you some nasty trick. He would even risk his cakes and would deliberately desire the most fatal rubbish, the most uneconomical absurdity, simply to introduce into all this positive good sense his fatal fantastic element. It is just his fantastic dreams, his vulgar folly that he will desire to retain, simply in order to prove to himself-as though that were so necessary-that men still are men and not the keys of a piano, which the laws of nature threaten to control so completely that soon one will be able to desire nothing but by the calendar. And that is not all: even if man really were nothing but a piano-key, even if this were proved to him by natural science and mathematics, even then he would not become reasonable, but would purposely do something perverse out of simple ingratitude, simply to gain his point. And if he does not find means he will contrive destruction and chaos, will contrive sufferings of all sorts, only to gain his point! He will launch a curse upon the world, and as only man can curse (it is his privilege, the primary distinction between him and other animals), may be by his curse alone he will attain his object-that is, convince himself that he is a man and not a piano-key! If you say that all this, too, can be calculated and tabulated-chaos and darkness and curses, so that the mere possibility of calculating it all beforehand would stop it all, and reason would reassert itself, then man would purposely go mad in order to be rid of reason and gain his point! I believe in it, I answer for it, for the whole work of man really seems to consist in nothing but proving to himself every minute that he is a man and not a piano-key! It may be at the cost of his skin, it may be by cannibalism! And this being so, can one help being tempted to rejoice that it has not yet come off, and that desire still depends on something we don't know?

You will scream at me (that is, if you condescend to do so) that no one is touching my free will, that all they are concerned with is that my will should of itself, of its own free will, coincide with my own normal interests, with the laws of nature and arithmetic.

Good heavens, gentlemen, what sort of free will is left when we come to tabulation and arithmetic, when it will all be a case of twice two make four? Twice two makes four without my will. As if free will meant that!

IX

Gentlemen, I am joking, and I know myself that my jokes are not brilliant, but you know one can take everything as a joke. I am, perhaps, jesting against the grain. Gentlemen, I am tormented by questions; answer them for me. You, for instance, want to cure men of their old habits and reform their will in accordance with science and good sense. But how do you know, not only that it is possible, but also that it is DESIRABLE to reform man in that way? And what leads you to the conclusion that man's inclinations NEED reforming? In short, how do you know that such a reformation will be a benefit to man? And to go to the root of the matter, why are you so positively convinced that not to act against his real normal interests guaranteed by the conclusions of reason and arithmetic is certainly always advantageous for man and must always be a law for mankind? So far, you know, this is only your supposition. It may be the law of logic, but not the law of humanity. You think, gentlemen, perhaps that I am mad? Allow me to defend myself. I agree that man is pre-eminently a creative animal, predestined to strive consciously for an object and to engage in engineering—that is, incessantly and eternally to make new roads, WHEREVER THEY MAY LEAD. But the reason why he wants sometimes to go off at a tangent may just be that he is PREDESTINED to make the road, and perhaps, too, that however stupid the "direct" practical man may be, the thought sometimes will occur to him that the road almost always does lead SOMEWHERE, and that the destination it leads to is less important than the process of making it, and that the chief thing is to save the well-conducted child from despising engineering, and so giving way to the fatal idleness, which, as we all know, is the mother of all the vices. Man likes to make roads and to create, that is a fact beyond dispute. But why has he such a passionate love for destruction and chaos also? Tell me that! But on that point I want to say a couple of words myself. May it not be that he loves chaos and destruction (there can be no disputing that he does sometimes love it) because he is instinctively afraid of attaining his object and completing the edifice he is constructing? Who knows, perhaps he only loves that edifice from a distance, and is by no means in love with it at close quarters; perhaps he only loves building it and does not want to live in it, but will leave it, when completed, for the use of LES ANIMAUX DOMESTIQUES—such as the ants, the sheep, and so on. Now

the ants have quite a different taste. They have a marvellous edifice of that pattern which endures for ever-the ant-heap.

With the ant-heap the respectable race of ants began and with the ant-heap they will probably end, which does the greatest credit to their perseverance and good sense. But man is a frivolous and incongruous creature, and perhaps, like a chess player, loves the process of the game, not the end of it. And who knows (there is no saying with certainty), perhaps the only goal on earth to which mankind is striving lies in this incessant process of attaining, in other words, in life itself, and not in the thing to be attained, which must always be expressed as a formula, as positive as twice two makes four, and such positiveness is not life, gentlemen, but is the beginning of death. Anyway, man has always been afraid of this mathematical certainty, and I am afraid of it now. Granted that man does nothing but seek that mathematical certainty, he traverses oceans, sacrifices his life in the quest, but to succeed, really to find it, dreads, I assure you. He feels that when he has found it there will be nothing for him to look for. When workmen have finished their work they do at least receive their pay, they go to the tavern, then they are taken to the police-station-and there is occupation for a week. But where can man go? Anyway, one can observe a certain awkwardness about him when he has attained such objects. He loves the process of attaining, but does not quite like to have attained, and that, of course, is very absurd. In fact, man is a comical creature; there seems to be a kind of jest in it all. But yet mathematical certainty is after all, something insufferable. Twice two makes four seems to me simply a piece of insolence. Twice two makes four is a pert coxcomb who stands with arms akimbo barring your path and spitting. I admit that twice two makes four is an excellent thing, but if we are to give everything its due, twice two makes five is sometimes a very charming thing too.

And why are you so firmly, so triumphantly, convinced that only the normal and the positive-in other words, only what is conducive to welfare-is for the advantage of man? Is not reason in error as regards advantage? Does not man, perhaps, love something besides well-being? Perhaps he is just as fond of suffering? Perhaps suffering is just as great a benefit to him as well-being? Man is sometimes extraordinarily, passionately, in love with suffering, and that is a fact. There is no need to appeal to universal history to prove that; only ask yourself, if you are a man and have lived at all. As far as my personal opinion is concerned, to care only for well-being seems to me

positively ill-bred. Whether it's good or bad, it is sometimes very pleasant, too, to smash things. I hold no brief for suffering nor for well-being either. I am standing for... my caprice, and for its being guaranteed to me when necessary. Suffering would be out of place in vaudevilles, for instance; I know that. In the "Palace of Crystal" it is unthinkable; suffering means doubt, negation, and what would be the good of a "palace of crystal" if there could be any doubt about it? And yet I think man will never renounce real suffering, that is, destruction and chaos. Why, suffering is the sole origin of consciousness. Though I did lay it down at the beginning that consciousness is the greatest misfortune for man, yet I know man prizes it and would not give it up for any satisfaction. Consciousness, for instance, is infinitely superior to twice two makes four. Once you have mathematical certainty there is nothing left to do or to understand. There will be nothing left but to bottle up your five senses and plunge into contemplation. While if you stick to consciousness, even though the same result is attained, you can at least flog yourself at times, and that will, at any rate, liven you up. Reactionary as it is, corporal punishment is better than nothing.

You believe in a palace of crystal that can never be destroyed—a palace at which one will not be able to put out one's tongue or make a long nose on the sly. And perhaps that is just why I am afraid of this edifice, that it is of crystal and can never be destroyed and that one cannot put one's tongue out at it even on the sly.

You see, if it were not a palace, but a hen-house, I might creep into it to avoid getting wet, and yet I would not call the hen-house a palace out of gratitude to it for keeping me dry. You laugh and say that in such circumstances a hen-house is as good as a mansion. Yes, I answer, if one had to live simply to keep out of the rain.

But what is to be done if I have taken it into my head that that is not the only object in life, and that if one must live one had better live in a mansion? That is my choice, my desire. You will only eradicate it when you have changed my preference. Well, do change it, allure me with something else, give me another ideal. But meanwhile I will not take a hen-house for a mansion. The palace of crystal may be an idle dream, it may be that it is inconsistent with the laws of nature and that I have invented it only through my own stupidity, through the old-fashioned irrational habits of my generation. But what does it matter to me that it is inconsistent? That makes no difference since it exists in my desires, or rather exists as long as my desires exist. Perhaps you are laughing again? Laugh away; I will put up with any mockery rather than pretend that I am satisfied when I am hungry. I know, anyway, that I will not be put off with a compromise, with a recurring zero, simply because it is consistent with the laws of nature and actually exists. I will not accept as the crown of my desires a block of buildings with tenements for the poor on a lease of a thousand years, and perhaps with a sign-board of a dentist hanging out. Destroy my desires, eradicate my ideals, show me something better, and I will follow you. You will say, perhaps, that it is not worth your trouble; but in that case I can give you the same answer. We are discussing things seriously; but if you won't deign to give me your attention, I will drop your acquaintance. I can retreat into my underground hole.

But while I am alive and have desires I would rather my hand were withered off than bring one brick to such a building! Don't remind me that I

have just rejected the palace of crystal for the sole reason that one cannot put out one's tongue at it. I did not say because I am so fond of putting my tongue out. Perhaps the thing I resented was, that of all your edifices there has not been one at which one could not put out one's tongue. On the contrary, I would let my tongue be cut off out of gratitude if things could be so arranged that I should lose all desire to put it out. It is not my fault that things cannot be so arranged, and that one must be satisfied with model flats. Then why am I made with such desires? Can I have been constructed simply in order to come to the conclusion that all my construction is a cheat? Can this be my whole purpose? I do not believe it.

But do you know what: I am convinced that we underground folk ought to be kept on a curb. Though we may sit forty years underground without speaking, when we do come out into the light of day and break out we talk and talk and talk...

XI

The long and the short of it is, gentlemen, that it is better to do nothing! Better conscious inertia! And so hurrah for underground! Though I have said that I envy the normal man to the last drop of my bile, yet I should not care to be in his place such as he is now (though I shall not cease envying him). No, no; anyway the underground life is more advantageous. There, at any rate, one can... Oh, but even now I am lying! I am lying because I know myself that it is not underground that is better, but something different, quite different, for which I am thirsting, but which I cannot find! Damn underground!

I will tell you another thing that would be better, and that is, if I myself believed in anything of what I have just written. I swear to you, gentlemen, there is not one thing, not one word of what I have written that I really believe. That is, I believe it, perhaps, but at the same time I feel and suspect that I am lying like a cobbler.

"Then why have you written all this?" you will say to me. "I ought to put you underground for forty years without anything to do and then come to you in your cellar, to find out what stage you have reached! How can a man be left with nothing to do for forty years?"

"Isn't that shameful, isn't that humiliating?" you will say, perhaps, wagging your heads contemptuously. "You thirst for life and try to settle the problems of life by a logical tangle. And how persistent, how insolent are your sallies, and at the same time what a scare you are in! You talk nonsense and are pleased with it; you say impudent things and are in continual alarm and apologising for them. You declare that you are afraid of nothing and at the same time try to ingratiate yourself in our good opinion. You declare that you are gnashing your teeth and at the same time you try to be witty so as to amuse us. You know that your witticisms are not witty, but you are evidently well satisfied with their literary value. You may, perhaps, have really suffered, but you have no respect for your own suffering. You may have sincerity, but you have no modesty; out of the pettiest vanity you expose your sincerity to publicity and ignominy. You doubtlessly mean to say something, but hide your last word through fear, because you have not the resolution to utter it, and only have a cowardly impudence. You boast of consciousness, but you are not sure of your ground, for though your mind works, yet your

heart is darkened and corrupt, and you cannot have a full, genuine consciousness without a pure heart. And how intrusive you are, how you insist and grimace! Lies, lies, lies!"

Of course I have myself made up all the things you say. That, too, is from underground. I have been for forty years listening to you through a crack under the floor. I have invented them myself, there was nothing else I could invent. It is no wonder that I have learned it by heart and it has taken a literary form...

But can you really be so credulous as to think that I will print all this and give it to you to read too? And another problem: why do I call you "gentlemen," why do I address you as though you really were my readers? Such confessions as I intend to make are never printed nor given to other people to read. Anyway, I am not strong-minded enough for that, and I don't see why I should be. But you see a fancy has occurred to me and I want to realise it at all costs. Let me explain.

Every man has reminiscences which he would not tell to everyone, but only to his friends. He has other matters in his mind which he would not reveal even to his friends, but only to himself, and that in secret. But there are other things which a man is afraid to tell even to himself, and every decent man has a number of such things stored away in his mind. The more decent he is, the greater the number of such things in his mind. Anyway, I have only lately determined to remember some of my early adventures. Till now I have always avoided them, even with a certain uneasiness. Now, when I am not only recalling them, but have actually decided to write an account of them, I want to try the experiment whether one can, even with oneself, be perfectly open and not take fright at the whole truth. I will observe, in parenthesis, that Heine says that a true autobiography is almost an impossibility, and that man is bound to lie about himself. He considers that Rousseau certainly told lies about himself in his confessions, and even intentionally lied, out of vanity. I am convinced that Heine is right; I quite understand how sometimes one may, out of sheer vanity, attribute regular crimes to oneself, and indeed I can very well conceive that kind of vanity. But Heine judged of people who made their confessions to the public. I write only for myself, and I wish to declare once and for all that if I write as though I were addressing readers, that is simply because it is easier for me to write in that form. It is a form, an empty form-I shall never have readers. I have made this plain already...

I don't wish to be hampered by any restrictions in the compilation of my

notes. I shall not attempt any system or method. I will jot things down as I remember them.

But here, perhaps, someone will catch at the word and ask me: if you really don't reckon on readers, why do you make such compacts with yourself-and on paper too-that is, that you won't attempt any system or method, that you jot things down as you remember them, and so on, and so on? Why are you explaining? Why do you apologise?

Well, there it is, I answer.

There is a whole psychology in all this, though. Perhaps it is simply that I am a coward. And perhaps that I purposely imagine an audience before me in order that I may be more dignified while I write. There are perhaps thousands of reasons. Again, what is my object precisely in writing? If it is not for the benefit of the public why should I not simply recall these incidents in my own mind without putting them on paper?

Quite so; but yet it is more imposing on paper. There is something more impressive in it; I shall be better able to criticise myself and improve my style. Besides, I shall perhaps obtain actual relief from writing. Today, for instance, I am particularly oppressed by one memory of a distant past. It came back vividly to my mind a few days ago, and has remained haunting me like an annoying tune that one cannot get rid of. And yet I must get rid of it somehow. I have hundreds of such reminiscences; but at times some one stands out from the hundred and oppresses me. For some reason I believe that if I write it down I should get rid of it. Why not try?

Besides, I am bored, and I never have anything to do. Writing will be a sort of work. They say work makes man kind-hearted and honest. Well, here is a chance for me, anyway.

Snow is falling today, yellow and dingy. It fell yesterday, too, and a few days ago. I fancy it is the wet snow that has reminded me of that incident which I cannot shake off now. And so let it be a story A PROPOS of the falling snow.

PART II

A Propos of the Wet Snow

When from dark error's subjugation
My words of passionate exhortation
Had wrenched thy fainting spirit free;
And writhing prone in thine affliction
Thou didst recall with malediction
The vice that had encompassed thee:
And when thy slumbering conscience, fretting
By recollection's torturing flame,
Thou didst reveal the hideous setting
Of thy life's current ere I came:
When suddenly I saw thee sicken,
And weeping, hide thine anguished face,
Revolted, maddened, horror-stricken,
At memories of foul disgrace.

NEKRASSOV (translated by Juliet Sorkin).

I

AT THAT TIME I was only twenty-four. My life was even then gloomy, ill-regulated, and as solitary as that of a savage. I made friends with no one and positively avoided talking, and buried myself more and more in my hole. At work in the office I never looked at anyone, and was perfectly well aware that my companions looked upon me, not only as a queer fellow, but even looked upon me-I always fancied this-with a sort of loathing. I sometimes wondered why it was that nobody except me fancied that he was looked upon with aversion? One of the clerks had a most repulsive, pock-marked face, which looked positively villainous. I believe I should not have dared to look at anyone with such an unsightly countenance. Another had such a very dirty old uniform that there was an unpleasant odour in his proximity. Yet not one of these gentlemen showed the slightest self-consciousness-either about their clothes or their countenance or their character in any way. Neither of them ever imagined that they were looked at with repulsion; if they had imagined it they would not have minded-so long as their superiors did not look at them in that way. It is clear to me now that, owing to my unbounded vanity and to the high standard I set for myself, I often looked at myself with furious discontent, which verged on loathing, and so I inwardly attributed the same feeling to everyone. I hated my face, for instance: I thought it disgusting, and even suspected that there was something base in my expression, and so every day when I turned up at the office I tried to behave as independently as possible, and to assume a lofty expression, so that I might not be suspected of being abject. "My face may be ugly," I thought, "but let it be lofty, expressive, and, above all, EXTREMELY intelligent." But I was positively and painfully certain that it was impossible for my countenance ever to express those qualities. And what was worst of all, I thought it actually stupid looking, and I would have been quite satisfied if I could have looked intelligent. In fact, I would even have put up with looking base if, at the same time, my face could have been thought strikingly intelligent.

Of course, I hated my fellow clerks one and all, and I despised them all, yet at the same time I was, as it were, afraid of them. In fact, it happened at times that I thought more highly of them than of myself. It somehow happened quite suddenly that I alternated between despising them and thinking them superior to myself. A cultivated and decent man cannot be vain

without setting a fearfully high standard for himself, and without despising and almost hating himself at certain moments. But whether I despised them or thought them superior I dropped my eyes almost every time I met anyone. I even made experiments whether I could face so and so's looking at me, and I was always the first to drop my eyes. This worried me to distraction. I had a sickly dread, too, of being ridiculous, and so had a slavish passion for the conventional in everything external. I loved to fall into the common rut, and had a whole-hearted terror of any kind of eccentricity in myself. But how could I live up to it? I was morbidly sensitive as a man of our age should be. They were all stupid, and as like one another as so many sheep. Perhaps I was the only one in the office who fancied that I was a coward and a slave, and I fancied it just because I was more highly developed. But it was not only that I fancied it, it really was so. I was a coward and a slave. I say this without the slightest embarrassment. Every decent man of our age must be a coward and a slave. That is his normal condition. Of that I am firmly persuaded. He is made and constructed to that very end. And not only at the present time owing to some casual circumstances, but always, at all times, a decent man is bound to be a coward and a slave. It is the law of nature for all decent people all over the earth. If anyone of them happens to be valiant about something, he need not be comforted nor carried away by that; he would show the white feather just the same before something else. That is how it invariably and inevitably ends. Only donkeys and mules are valiant, and they only till they are pushed up to the wall. It is not worth while to pay attention to them for they really are of no consequence.

Another circumstance, too, worried me in those days: that there was no one like me and I was unlike anyone else. "I am alone and they are EVERYONE," I thought-and pondered.

From that it is evident that I was still a youngster.

The very opposite sometimes happened. It was loathsome sometimes to go to the office; things reached such a point that I often came home ill. But all at once, A PROPOS of nothing, there would come a phase of scepticism and indifference (everything happened in phases to me), and I would laugh myself at my intolerance and fastidiousness, I would reproach myself with being ROMANTIC. At one time I was unwilling to speak to anyone, while at other times I would not only talk, but go to the length of contemplating making friends with them. All my fastidiousness would suddenly, for no rhyme or reason, vanish. Who knows, perhaps I never had really had it, and it

had simply been affected, and got out of books. I have not decided that question even now. Once I quite made friends with them, visited their homes, played preference, drank vodka, talked of promotions... But here let me make a digression.

We Russians, speaking generally, have never had those foolish transcendental "romantics"-German, and still more French-on whom nothing produces any effect; if there were an earthquake, if all France perished at the barricades, they would still be the same, they would not even have the decency to affect a change, but would still go on singing their transcendental songs to the hour of their death, because they are fools. We, in Russia, have no fools; that is well known. That is what distinguishes us from foreign lands. Consequently these transcendental natures are not found amongst us in their pure form. The idea that they are is due to our "realistic" journalists and critics of that day, always on the look out for Kostanzhoglos and Uncle Pyotr Ivanitchs and foolishly accepting them as our ideal; they have slandered our romantics, taking them for the same transcendental sort as in Germany or France. On the contrary, the characteristics of our "romantics" are absolutely and directly opposed to the transcendental European type, and no European standard can be applied to them. (Allow me to make use of this word "romantic"-an old-fashioned and much respected word which has done good service and is familiar to all.) The characteristics of our romantic are to understand everything, TO SEE EVERYTHING AND TO SEE IT OFTEN INCOMPARABLY MORE CLEARLY THAN OUR MOST REALISTIC MINDS SEE IT; to refuse to accept anyone or anything, but at the same time not to despise anything; to give way, to yield, from policy; never to lose sight of a useful practical object (such as rent-free quarters at the government expense, pensions, decorations), to keep their eye on that object through all the enthusiasms and volumes of lyrical poems, and at the same time to preserve "the sublime and the beautiful" inviolate within them to the hour of their death, and to preserve themselves also, incidentally, like some precious jewel wrapped in cotton wool if only for the benefit of "the sublime and the beautiful." Our "romantic" is a man of great breadth and the greatest rogue of all our rogues, I assure you... I can assure you from experience, indeed. Of course, that is, if he is intelligent. But what am I saying! The romantic is always intelligent, and I only meant to observe that although we have had foolish romantics they don't count, and they were only so because in the flower of their youth they degenerated into Germans, and to preserve their

precious jewel more comfortably, settled somewhere out there-by preference in Weimar or the Black Forest.

I, for instance, genuinely despised my official work and did not openly abuse it simply because I was in it myself and got a salary for it. Anyway, take note, I did not openly abuse it. Our romantic would rather go out of his mind-a thing, however, which very rarely happens-than take to open abuse, unless he had some other career in view; and he is never kicked out. At most, they would take him to the lunatic asylum as "the King of Spain" if he should go very mad. But it is only the thin, fair people who go out of their minds in Russia. Innumerable "romantics" attain later in life to considerable rank in the service. Their many-sidedness is remarkable! And what a faculty they have for the most contradictory sensations! I was comforted by this thought even in those days, and I am of the same opinion now. That is why there are so many "broad natures" among us who never lose their ideal even in the depths of degradation; and though they never stir a finger for their ideal, though they are arrant thieves and knaves, yet they tearfully cherish their first ideal and are extraordinarily honest at heart. Yes, it is only among us that the most incorrigible rogue can be absolutely and loftily honest at heart without in the least ceasing to be a rogue. I repeat, our romantics, frequently, become such accomplished rascals (I use the term "rascals" affectionately), suddenly display such a sense of reality and practical knowledge that their bewildered superiors and the public generally can only ejaculate in amazement.

Their many-sidedness is really amazing, and goodness knows what it may develop into later on, and what the future has in store for us. It is not a poor material! I do not say this from any foolish or boastful patriotism. But I feel sure that you are again imagining that I am joking. Or perhaps it's just the contrary and you are convinced that I really think so. Anyway, gentlemen, I shall welcome both views as an honour and a special favour. And do forgive my digression.

I did not, of course, maintain friendly relations with my comrades and soon was at loggerheads with them, and in my youth and inexperience I even gave up bowing to them, as though I had cut off all relations. That, however, only happened to me once. As a rule, I was always alone.

In the first place I spent most of my time at home, reading. I tried to stifle all that was continually seething within me by means of external impressions. And the only external means I had was reading. Reading, of course, was a great help-exciting me, giving me pleasure and pain. But at times it bored me

fearfully. One longed for movement in spite of everything, and I plunged all at once into dark, underground, loathsome vice of the pettiest kind. My wretched passions were acute, smarting, from my continual, sickly irritability I had hysterical impulses, with tears and convulsions. I had no resource except reading, that is, there was nothing in my surroundings which I could respect and which attracted me. I was overwhelmed with depression, too; I had an hysterical craving for incongruity and for contrast, and so I took to vice. I have not said all this to justify myself... But, no! I am lying. I did want to justify myself. I make that little observation for my own benefit, gentlemen. I don't want to lie. I vowed to myself I would not.

And so, furtively, timidly, in solitude, at night, I indulged in filthy vice, with a feeling of shame which never deserted me, even at the most loathsome moments, and which at such moments nearly made me curse. Already even then I had my underground world in my soul. I was fearfully afraid of being seen, of being met, of being recognised. I visited various obscure haunts.

One night as I was passing a tavern I saw through a lighted window some gentlemen fighting with billiard cues, and saw one of them thrown out of the window. At other times I should have felt very much disgusted, but I was in such a mood at the time, that I actually envied the gentleman thrown out of the window-and I envied him so much that I even went into the tavern and into the billiard-room. "Perhaps," I thought, "I'll have a fight, too, and they'll throw me out of the window."

I was not drunk-but what is one to do-depression will drive a man to such a pitch of hysteria? But nothing happened. It seemed that I was not even equal to being thrown out of the window and I went away without having my fight.

An officer put me in my place from the first moment.

I was standing by the billiard-table and in my ignorance blocking up the way, and he wanted to pass; he took me by the shoulders and without a word-without a warning or explanation-moved me from where I was standing to another spot and passed by as though he had not noticed me. I could have forgiven blows, but I could not forgive his having moved me without noticing me.

Devil knows what I would have given for a real regular quarrel-a more decent, a more LITERARY one, so to speak. I had been treated like a fly. This officer was over six foot, while I was a spindly little fellow. But the quarrel was in my hands. I had only to protest and I certainly would have

been thrown out of the window. But I changed my mind and preferred to beat a resentful retreat.

I went out of the tavern straight home, confused and troubled, and the next night I went out again with the same lewd intentions, still more furtively, abjectly and miserably than before, as it were, with tears in my eyes-but still I did go out again. Don't imagine, though, it was cowardice made me slink away from the officer; I never have been a coward at heart, though I have always been a coward in action. Don't be in a hurry to laugh-I assure you I can explain it all.

Oh, if only that officer had been one of the sort who would consent to fight a duel! But no, he was one of those gentlemen (alas, long extinct!) who preferred fighting with cues or, like Gogol's Lieutenant Pirogov, appealing to the police. They did not fight duels and would have thought a duel with a civilian like me an utterly unseemly procedure in any case-and they looked upon the duel altogether as something impossible, something free-thinking and French. But they were quite ready to bully, especially when they were over six foot.

I did not slink away through cowardice, but through an unbounded vanity. I was afraid not of his six foot, not of getting a sound thrashing and being thrown out of the window; I should have had physical courage enough, I assure you; but I had not the moral courage. What I was afraid of was that everyone present, from the insolent marker down to the lowest little stinking, pimply clerk in a greasy collar, would jeer at me and fail to understand when I began to protest and to address them in literary language. For of the point of honour-not of honour, but of the point of honour (POINT D'HONNEUR)-one cannot speak among us except in literary language. You can't allude to the "point of honour" in ordinary language. I was fully convinced (the sense of reality, in spite of all my romanticism!) that they would all simply split their sides with laughter, and that the officer would not simply beat me, that is, without insulting me, but would certainly prod me in the back with his knee, kick me round the billiard-table, and only then perhaps have pity and drop me out of the window.

Of course, this trivial incident could not with me end in that. I often met that officer afterwards in the street and noticed him very carefully. I am not quite sure whether he recognised me, I imagine not; I judge from certain signs. But I-I stared at him with spite and hatred and so it went on... for several years! My resentment grew even deeper with years. At first I began

making stealthy inquiries about this officer. It was difficult for me to do so, for I knew no one. But one day I heard someone shout his surname in the street as I was following him at a distance, as though I were tied to him-and so I learnt his surname. Another time I followed him to his flat, and for ten kopecks learned from the porter where he lived, on which storey, whether he lived alone or with others, and so on-in fact, everything one could learn from a porter. One morning, though I had never tried my hand with the pen, it suddenly occurred to me to write a satire on this officer in the form of a novel which would unmask his villainy. I wrote the novel with relish. I did unmask his villainy, I even exaggerated it; at first I so altered his surname that it could easily be recognised, but on second thoughts I changed it, and sent the story to the OTETCHESTVENNIYA ZAPISKI. But at that time such attacks were not the fashion and my story was not printed. That was a great vexation to me.

Sometimes I was positively choked with resentment. At last I determined to challenge my enemy to a duel. I composed a splendid, charming letter to him, imploring him to apologise to me, and hinting rather plainly at a duel in case of refusal. The letter was so composed that if the officer had had the least understanding of the sublime and the beautiful he would certainly have flung himself on my neck and have offered me his friendship. And how fine that would have been! How we should have got on together! "He could have shielded me with his higher rank, while I could have improved his mind with my culture, and, well... my ideas, and all sorts of things might have happened." Only fancy, this was two years after his insult to me, and my challenge would have been a ridiculous anachronism, in spite of all the ingenuity of my letter in disguising and explaining away the anachronism. But, thank God (to this day I thank the Almighty with tears in my eyes) I did not send the letter to him. Cold shivers run down my back when I think of what might have happened if I had sent it.

And all at once I revenged myself in the simplest way, by a stroke of genius! A brilliant thought suddenly dawned upon me. Sometimes on holidays I used to stroll along the sunny side of the Nevsky about four o'clock in the afternoon. Though it was hardly a stroll so much as a series of innumerable miseries, humiliations and resentments; but no doubt that was just what I wanted. I used to wriggle along in a most unseemly fashion, like an eel, continually moving aside to make way for generals, for officers of the guards and the hussars, or for ladies. At such minutes there used to be a

convulsive twinge at my heart, and I used to feel hot all down my back at the mere thought of the wretchedness of my attire, of the wretchedness and abjectness of my little scurrying figure. This was a regular martyrdom, a continual, intolerable humiliation at the thought, which passed into an incessant and direct sensation, that I was a mere fly in the eyes of all this world, a nasty, disgusting fly-more intelligent, more highly developed, more refined in feeling than any of them, of course-but a fly that was continually making way for everyone, insulted and injured by everyone. Why I inflicted this torture upon myself, why I went to the Nevsky, I don't know. I felt simply drawn there at every possible opportunity.

Already then I began to experience a rush of the enjoyment of which I spoke in the first chapter. After my affair with the officer I felt even more drawn there than before: it was on the Nevsky that I met him most frequently, there I could admire him. He, too, went there chiefly on holidays, He, too, turned out of his path for generals and persons of high rank, and he too, wriggled between them like an eel; but people, like me, or even better dressed than me, he simply walked over; he made straight for them as though there was nothing but empty space before him, and never, under any circumstances, turned aside. I gloated over my resentment watching him and... always resentfully made way for him. It exasperated me that even in the street I could not be on an even footing with him.

"Why must you invariably be the first to move aside?" I kept asking myself in hysterical rage, waking up sometimes at three o'clock in the morning. "Why is it you and not he? There's no regulation about it; there's no written law. Let the making way be equal as it usually is when refined people meet; he moves half-way and you move half-way; you pass with mutual respect."

But that never happened, and I always moved aside, while he did not even notice my making way for him. And lo and behold a bright idea dawned upon me! "What," I thought, "if I meet him and don't move on one side? What if I don't move aside on purpose, even if I knock up against him? How would that be?" This audacious idea took such a hold on me that it gave me no peace. I was dreaming of it continually, horribly, and I purposely went more frequently to the Nevsky in order to picture more vividly how I should do it when I did do it. I was delighted. This intention seemed to me more and more practical and possible.

"Of course I shall not really push him," I thought, already more good-

natured in my joy. "I will simply not turn aside, will run up against him, not very violently, but just shouldering each other-just as much as decency permits. I will push against him just as much as he pushes against me." At last I made up my mind completely. But my preparations took a great deal of time. To begin with, when I carried out my plan I should need to be looking rather more decent, and so I had to think of my get-up. "In case of emergency, if, for instance, there were any sort of public scandal (and the public there is of the most RECHERCHE: the Countess walks there; Prince D. walks there; all the literary world is there), I must be well dressed; that inspires respect and of itself puts us on an equal footing in the eyes of the society."

With this object I asked for some of my salary in advance, and bought at Tchurkin's a pair of black gloves and a decent hat. Black gloves seemed to me both more dignified and BON TON than the lemon-coloured ones which I had contemplated at first. "The colour is too gaudy, it looks as though one were trying to be conspicuous," and I did not take the lemon-coloured ones. I had got ready long beforehand a good shirt, with white bone studs; my overcoat was the only thing that held me back. The coat in itself was a very good one, it kept me warm; but it was wadded and it had a raccoon collar which was the height of vulgarity. I had to change the collar at any sacrifice, and to have a beaver one like an officer's. For this purpose I began visiting the Gostiny Dvor and after several attempts I pitched upon a piece of cheap German beaver. Though these German beavers soon grow shabby and look wretched, yet at first they look exceedingly well, and I only needed it for the occasion. I asked the price; even so, it was too expensive. After thinking it over thoroughly I decided to sell my raccoon collar. The rest of the money-a considerable sum for me, I decided to borrow from Anton Antonitch Syetotchkin, my immediate superior, an unassuming person, though grave and judicious. He never lent money to anyone, but I had, on entering the service, been specially recommended to him by an important personage who had got me my berth. I was horribly worried. To borrow from Anton Antonitch seemed to me monstrous and shameful. I did not sleep for two or three nights. Indeed, I did not sleep well at that time, I was in a fever; I had a vague sinking at my heart or else a sudden throbbing, throbbing, throbbing! Anton Antonitch was surprised at first, then he frowned, then he reflected, and did after all lend me the money, receiving from me a written authorisation to take from my salary a fortnight later the sum that he had lent

me.

In this way everything was at last ready. The handsome beaver replaced the mean-looking raccoon, and I began by degrees to get to work. It would never have done to act offhand, at random; the plan had to be carried out skilfully, by degrees. But I must confess that after many efforts I began to despair: we simply could not run into each other. I made every preparation, I was quite determined-it seemed as though we should run into one another directly-and before I knew what I was doing I had stepped aside for him again and he had passed without noticing me. I even prayed as I approached him that God would grant me determination. One time I had made up my mind thoroughly, but it ended in my stumbling and falling at his feet because at the very last instant when I was six inches from him my courage failed me. He very calmly stepped over me, while I flew on one side like a ball. That night I was ill again, feverish and delirious.

And suddenly it ended most happily. The night before I had made up my mind not to carry out my fatal plan and to abandon it all, and with that object I went to the Nevsky for the last time, just to see how I would abandon it all. Suddenly, three paces from my enemy, I unexpectedly made up my mind-I closed my eyes, and we ran full tilt, shoulder to shoulder, against one another! I did not budge an inch and passed him on a perfectly equal footing! He did not even look round and pretended not to notice it; but he was only pretending, I am convinced of that. I am convinced of that to this day! Of course, I got the worst of it-he was stronger, but that was not the point. The point was that I had attained my object, I had kept up my dignity, I had not yielded a step, and had put myself publicly on an equal social footing with him. I returned home feeling that I was fully avenged for everything. I was delighted. I was triumphant and sang Italian arias. Of course, I will not describe to you what happened to me three days later; if you have read my first chapter you can guess for yourself. The officer was afterwards transferred; I have not seen him now for fourteen years. What is the dear fellow doing now? Whom is he walking over?

II

But the period of my dissipation would end and I always felt very sick afterwards. It was followed by remorse-I tried to drive it away; I felt too sick. By degrees, however, I grew used to that too. I grew used to everything, or rather I voluntarily resigned myself to enduring it. But I had a means of escape that reconciled everything-that was to find refuge in "the sublime and the beautiful," in dreams, of course. I was a terrible dreamer, I would dream for three months on end, tucked away in my corner, and you may believe me that at those moments I had no resemblance to the gentleman who, in the perturbation of his chicken heart, put a collar of German beaver on his great-coat. I suddenly became a hero. I would not have admitted my six-foot lieutenant even if he had called on me. I could not even picture him before me then. What were my dreams and how I could satisfy myself with them-it is hard to say now, but at the time I was satisfied with them. Though, indeed, even now, I am to some extent satisfied with them. Dreams were particularly sweet and vivid after a spell of dissipation; they came with remorse and with tears, with curses and transports. There were moments of such positive intoxication, of such happiness, that there was not the faintest trace of irony within me, on my honour. I had faith, hope, love. I believed blindly at such times that by some miracle, by some external circumstance, all this would suddenly open out, expand; that suddenly a vista of suitable activity-beneficent, good, and, above all, READY MADE (what sort of activity I had no idea, but the great thing was that it should be all ready for me)-would rise up before me-and I should come out into the light of day, almost riding a white horse and crowned with laurel. Anything but the foremost place I could not conceive for myself, and for that very reason I quite contentedly occupied the lowest in reality. Either to be a hero or to grovel in the mud-there was nothing between. That was my ruin, for when I was in the mud I comforted myself with the thought that at other times I was a hero, and the hero was a cloak for the mud: for an ordinary man it was shameful to defile himself, but a hero was too lofty to be utterly defiled, and so he might defile himself. It is worth noting that these attacks of the "sublime and the beautiful" visited me even during the period of dissipation and just at the times when I was touching the bottom. They came in separate spurts, as though reminding me of themselves, but did not banish the dissipation by their appearance. On the

contrary, they seemed to add a zest to it by contrast, and were only sufficiently present to serve as an appetising sauce. That sauce was made up of contradictions and sufferings, of agonising inward analysis, and all these pangs and pin-pricks gave a certain piquancy, even a significance to my dissipation-in fact, completely answered the purpose of an appetising sauce. There was a certain depth of meaning in it. And I could hardly have resigned myself to the simple, vulgar, direct debauchery of a clerk and have endured all the filthiness of it. What could have allured me about it then and have drawn me at night into the street? No, I had a lofty way of getting out of it all.

And what loving-kindness, oh Lord, what loving-kindness I felt at times in those dreams of mine! in those "flights into the sublime and the beautiful"; though it was fantastic love, though it was never applied to anything human in reality, yet there was so much of this love that one did not feel afterwards even the impulse to apply it in reality; that would have been superfluous. Everything, however, passed satisfactorily by a lazy and fascinating transition into the sphere of art, that is, into the beautiful forms of life, lying ready, largely stolen from the poets and novelists and adapted to all sorts of needs and uses. I, for instance, was triumphant over everyone; everyone, of course, was in dust and ashes, and was forced spontaneously to recognise my superiority, and I forgave them all. I was a poet and a grand gentleman, I fell in love; I came in for countless millions and immediately devoted them to humanity, and at the same time I confessed before all the people my shameful deeds, which, of course, were not merely shameful, but had in them much that was "sublime and beautiful" something in the Manfred style. Everyone would kiss me and weep (what idiots they would be if they did not), while I should go barefoot and hungry preaching new ideas and fighting a victorious Austerlitz against the obscurantists. Then the band would play a march, an amnesty would be declared, the Pope would agree to retire from Rome to Brazil; then there would be a ball for the whole of Italy at the Villa Borghese on the shores of Lake Como, Lake Como being for that purpose transferred to the neighbourhood of Rome; then would come a scene in the bushes, and so on, and so on-as though you did not know all about it? You will say that it is vulgar and contemptible to drag all this into public after all the tears and transports which I have myself confessed. But why is it contemptible? Can you imagine that I am ashamed of it all, and that it was stupider than anything in your life, gentlemen? And I can assure you that some of these fancies were by no means badly composed... It did not all happen on the shores of Lake

Como. And yet you are right-it really is vulgar and contemptible. And most contemptible of all it is that now I am attempting to justify myself to you. And even more contemptible than that is my making this remark now. But that's enough, or there will be no end to it; each step will be more contemptible than the last...

I could never stand more than three months of dreaming at a time without feeling an irresistible desire to plunge into society. To plunge into society meant to visit my superior at the office, Anton Antonitch Syetotchkin. He was the only permanent acquaintance I have had in my life, and I wonder at the fact myself now. But I only went to see him when that phase came over me, and when my dreams had reached such a point of bliss that it became essential at once to embrace my fellows and all mankind; and for that purpose I needed, at least, one human being, actually existing. I had to call on Anton Antonitch, however, on Tuesday-his at-home day; so I had always to time my passionate desire to embrace humanity so that it might fall on a Tuesday.

This Anton Antonitch lived on the fourth storey in a house in Five Corners, in four low-pitched rooms, one smaller than the other, of a particularly frugal and sallow appearance. He had two daughters and their aunt, who used to pour out the tea. Of the daughters one was thirteen and another fourteen, they both had snub noses, and I was awfully shy of them because they were always whispering and giggling together. The master of the house usually sat in his study on a leather couch in front of the table with some grey-headed gentleman, usually a colleague from our office or some other department. I never saw more than two or three visitors there, always the same. They talked about the excise duty; about business in the senate, about salaries, about promotions, about His Excellency, and the best means of pleasing him, and so on. I had the patience to sit like a fool beside these people for four hours at a stretch, listening to them without knowing what to say to them or venturing to say a word. I became stupefied, several times I felt myself perspiring, I was overcome by a sort of paralysis; but this was pleasant and good for me. On returning home I deferred for a time my desire to embrace all mankind.

I had however one other acquaintance of a sort, Simonov, who was an old schoolfellow. I had a number of schoolfellows, indeed, in Petersburg, but I did not associate with them and had even given up nodding to them in the street. I believe I had transferred into the department I was in simply to avoid their company and to cut off all connection with my hateful childhood.

Curses on that school and all those terrible years of penal servitude! In short, I parted from my schoolfellows as soon as I got out into the world. There were two or three left to whom I nodded in the street. One of them was Simonov, who had in no way been distinguished at school, was of a quiet and equable disposition; but I discovered in him a certain independence of character and even honesty I don't even suppose that he was particularly stupid. I had at one time spent some rather soulful moments with him, but these had not lasted long and had somehow been suddenly clouded over. He was evidently uncomfortable at these reminiscences, and was, I fancy, always afraid that I might take up the same tone again. I suspected that he had an aversion for me, but still I went on going to see him, not being quite certain of it.

And so on one occasion, unable to endure my solitude and knowing that as it was Thursday Anton Antonitch's door would be closed, I thought of Simonov. Climbing up to his fourth storey I was thinking that the man disliked me and that it was a mistake to go and see him. But as it always happened that such reflections impelled me, as though purposely, to put myself into a false position, I went in. It was almost a year since I had last seen Simonov.

III

I found two of my old schoolfellows with him. They seemed to be discussing an important matter. All of them took scarcely any notice of my entrance, which was strange, for I had not met them for years. Evidently they looked upon me as something on the level of a common fly. I had not been treated like that even at school, though they all hated me. I knew, of course, that they must despise me now for my lack of success in the service, and for my having let myself sink so low, going about badly dressed and so on-which seemed to them a sign of my incapacity and insignificance. But I had not expected such contempt. Simonov was positively surprised at my turning up. Even in old days he had always seemed surprised at my coming. All this disconcerted me: I sat down, feeling rather miserable, and began listening to what they were saying.

They were engaged in warm and earnest conversation about a farewell dinner which they wanted to arrange for the next day to a comrade of theirs called Zverkov, an officer in the army, who was going away to a distant province. This Zverkov had been all the time at school with me too. I had begun to hate him particularly in the upper forms. In the lower forms he had simply been a pretty, playful boy whom everybody liked. I had hated him, however, even in the lower forms, just because he was a pretty and playful boy. He was always bad at his lessons and got worse and worse as he went on; however, he left with a good certificate, as he had powerful interests. During his last year at school he came in for an estate of two hundred serfs, and as almost all of us were poor he took up a swaggering tone among us. He was vulgar in the extreme, but at the same time he was a good-natured fellow, even in his swaggering. In spite of superficial, fantastic and sham notions of honour and dignity, all but very few of us positively grovelled before Zverkov, and the more so the more he swaggered. And it was not from any interested motive that they grovelled, but simply because he had been favoured by the gifts of nature. Moreover, it was, as it were, an accepted idea among us that Zverkov was a specialist in regard to tact and the social graces. This last fact particularly infuriated me. I hated the abrupt self-confident tone of his voice, his admiration of his own witticisms, which were often frightfully stupid, though he was bold in his language; I hated his handsome, but stupid face (for which I would, however, have gladly exchanged my

intelligent one), and the free-and-easy military manners in fashion in the "forties." I hated the way in which he used to talk of his future conquests of women (he did not venture to begin his attack upon women until he had the epaulettes of an officer, and was looking forward to them with impatience), and boasted of the duels he would constantly be fighting. I remember how I, invariably so taciturn, suddenly fastened upon Zverkov, when one day talking at a leisure moment with his schoolfellows of his future relations with the fair sex, and growing as sportive as a puppy in the sun, he all at once declared that he would not leave a single village girl on his estate unnoticed, that that was his DROIT DE SEIGNEUR, and that if the peasants dared to protest he would have them all flogged and double the tax on them, the bearded rascals. Our servile rabble applauded, but I attacked him, not from compassion for the girls and their fathers, but simply because they were applauding such an insect. I got the better of him on that occasion, but though Zverkov was stupid he was lively and impudent, and so laughed it off, and in such a way that my victory was not really complete; the laugh was on his side. He got the better of me on several occasions afterwards, but without malice, jestingly, casually. I remained angrily and contemptuously silent and would not answer him. When we left school he made advances to me; I did not rebuff them, for I was flattered, but we soon parted and quite naturally. Afterwards I heard of his barrack-room success as a lieutenant, and of the fast life he was leading. Then there came other rumours-of his successes in the service. By then he had taken to cutting me in the street, and I suspected that he was afraid of compromising himself by greeting a personage as insignificant as me. I saw him once in the theatre, in the third tier of boxes. By then he was wearing shoulder-straps. He was twisting and twirling about, ingratiating himself with the daughters of an ancient General. In three years he had gone off considerably, though he was still rather handsome and adroit. One could see that by the time he was thirty he would be corpulent. So it was to this Zverkov that my schoolfellows were going to give a dinner on his departure. They had kept up with him for those three years, though privately they did not consider themselves on an equal footing with him, I am convinced of that.

Of Simonov's two visitors, one was Ferfitchkin, a Russianised German-a little fellow with the face of a monkey, a blockhead who was always deriding everyone, a very bitter enemy of mine from our days in the lower forms-a vulgar, impudent, swaggering fellow, who affected a most sensitive feeling of personal honour, though, of course, he was a wretched little coward at heart.

He was one of those worshippers of Zverkov who made up to the latter from interested motives, and often borrowed money from him. Simonov's other visitor, Trudolyubov, was a person in no way remarkable—a tall young fellow, in the army, with a cold face, fairly honest, though he worshipped success of every sort, and was only capable of thinking of promotion. He was some sort of distant relation of Zverkov's, and this, foolish as it seems, gave him a certain importance among us. He always thought me of no consequence whatever; his behaviour to me, though not quite courteous, was tolerable.

"Well, with seven roubles each," said Trudolyubov, "twenty-one roubles between the three of us, we ought to be able to get a good dinner. Zverkov, of course, won't pay."

"Of course not, since we are inviting him," Simonov decided.

"Can you imagine," Ferfitchkin interrupted hotly and conceitedly, like some insolent flunkey boasting of his master the General's decorations, "can you imagine that Zverkov will let us pay alone? He will accept from delicacy, but he will order half a dozen bottles of champagne."

"Do we want half a dozen for the four of us?" observed Trudolyubov, taking notice only of the half dozen.

"So the three of us, with Zverkov for the fourth, twenty-one roubles, at the Hotel de Paris at five o'clock tomorrow," Simonov, who had been asked to make the arrangements, concluded finally.

"How twenty-one roubles?" I asked in some agitation, with a show of being offended; "if you count me it will not be twenty-one, but twenty-eight roubles."

It seemed to me that to invite myself so suddenly and unexpectedly would be positively graceful, and that they would all be conquered at once and would look at me with respect.

"Do you want to join, too?" Simonov observed, with no appearance of pleasure, seeming to avoid looking at me. He knew me through and through.

It infuriated me that he knew me so thoroughly.

"Why not? I am an old schoolfellow of his, too, I believe, and I must own I feel hurt that you have left me out," I said, boiling over again.

"And where were we to find you?" Ferfitchkin put in roughly.

"You never were on good terms with Zverkov," Trudolyubov added, frowning.

But I had already clutched at the idea and would not give it up.

"It seems to me that no one has a right to form an opinion upon that," I

retorted in a shaking voice, as though something tremendous had happened. "Perhaps that is just my reason for wishing it now, that I have not always been on good terms with him."

"Oh, there's no making you out... with these refinements," Trudolyubov jeered.

"We'll put your name down," Simonov decided, addressing me. "Tomorrow at five-o'clock at the Hotel de Paris."

"What about the money?" Ferfitchkin began in an undertone, indicating me to Simonov, but he broke off, for even Simonov was embarrassed.

"That will do," said Trudolyubov, getting up. "If he wants to come so much, let him."

"But it's a private thing, between us friends," Ferfitchkin said crossly, as he, too, picked up his hat. "It's not an official gathering."

"We do not want at all, perhaps..."

They went away. Ferfitchkin did not greet me in any way as he went out, Trudolyubov barely nodded. Simonov, with whom I was left TETE-A-TETE, was in a state of vexation and perplexity, and looked at me queerly. He did not sit down and did not ask me to.

"H'm... yes... tomorrow, then. Will you pay your subscription now? I just ask so as to know," he muttered in embarrassment.

I flushed crimson, as I did so I remembered that I had owed Simonov fifteen roubles for ages-which I had, indeed, never forgotten, though I had not paid it.

"You will understand, Simonov, that I could have no idea when I came here... I am very much vexed that I have forgotten..."

"All right, all right, that doesn't matter. You can pay tomorrow after the dinner. I simply wanted to know... Please don't..."

He broke off and began pacing the room still more vexed. As he walked he began to stamp with his heels.

"Am I keeping you?" I asked, after two minutes of silence.

"Oh!" he said, starting, "that is-to be truthful-yes. I have to go and see someone... not far from here," he added in an apologetic voice, somewhat abashed.

"My goodness, why didn't you say so?" I cried, seizing my cap, with an astonishingly free-and-easy air, which was the last thing I should have expected of myself.

"It's close by... not two paces away," Simonov repeated, accompanying

me to the front door with a fussy air which did not suit him at all. "So five o'clock, punctually, tomorrow," he called down the stairs after me. He was very glad to get rid of me. I was in a fury.

"What possessed me, what possessed me to force myself upon them?" I wondered, grinding my teeth as I strode along the street, "for a scoundrel, a pig like that Zverkov! Of course I had better not go; of course, I must just snap my fingers at them. I am not bound in any way. I'll send Simonov a note by tomorrow's post..."

But what made me furious was that I knew for certain that I should go, that I should make a point of going; and the more tactless, the more unseemly my going would be, the more certainly I would go.

And there was a positive obstacle to my going: I had no money. All I had was nine roubles, I had to give seven of that to my servant, Apollon, for his monthly wages. That was all I paid him-he had to keep himself.

Not to pay him was impossible, considering his character. But I will talk about that fellow, about that plague of mine, another time.

However, I knew I should go and should not pay him his wages.

That night I had the most hideous dreams. No wonder; all the evening I had been oppressed by memories of my miserable days at school, and I could not shake them off. I was sent to the school by distant relations, upon whom I was dependent and of whom I have heard nothing since-they sent me there a forlorn, silent boy, already crushed by their reproaches, already troubled by doubt, and looking with savage distrust at everyone. My schoolfellows met me with spiteful and merciless jibes because I was not like any of them. But I could not endure their taunts; I could not give in to them with the ignoble readiness with which they gave in to one another. I hated them from the first, and shut myself away from everyone in timid, wounded and disproportionate pride. Their coarseness revolted me. They laughed cynically at my face, at my clumsy figure; and yet what stupid faces they had themselves. In our school the boys' faces seemed in a special way to degenerate and grow stupider. How many fine-looking boys came to us! In a few years they became repulsive. Even at sixteen I wondered at them morosely; even then I was struck by the pettiness of their thoughts, the stupidity of their pursuits, their games, their conversations. They had no understanding of such essential things, they took no interest in such striking, impressive subjects, that I could not help considering them inferior to myself. It was not wounded vanity that drove me to it, and for God's sake do not thrust upon me your hackneyed

remarks, repeated to nausea, that "I was only a dreamer," while they even then had an understanding of life. They understood nothing, they had no idea of real life, and I swear that that was what made me most indignant with them. On the contrary, the most obvious, striking reality they accepted with fantastic stupidity and even at that time were accustomed to respect success. Everything that was just, but oppressed and looked down upon, they laughed at heartlessly and shamefully. They took rank for intelligence; even at sixteen they were already talking about a snug berth. Of course, a great deal of it was due to their stupidity, to the bad examples with which they had always been surrounded in their childhood and boyhood. They were monstrously depraved. Of course a great deal of that, too, was superficial and an assumption of cynicism; of course there were glimpses of youth and freshness even in their depravity; but even that freshness was not attractive, and showed itself in a certain rakishness. I hated them horribly, though perhaps I was worse than any of them. They repaid me in the same way, and did not conceal their aversion for me. But by then I did not desire their affection: on the contrary, I continually longed for their humiliation. To escape from their derision I purposely began to make all the progress I could with my studies and forced my way to the very top. This impressed them. Moreover, they all began by degrees to grasp that I had already read books none of them could read, and understood things (not forming part of our school curriculum) of which they had not even heard. They took a savage and sarcastic view of it, but were morally impressed, especially as the teachers began to notice me on those grounds. The mockery ceased, but the hostility remained, and cold and strained relations became permanent between us. In the end I could not put up with it: with years a craving for society, for friends, developed in me. I attempted to get on friendly terms with some of my schoolfellows; but somehow or other my intimacy with them was always strained and soon ended of itself. Once, indeed, I did have a friend. But I was already a tyrant at heart; I wanted to exercise unbounded sway over him; I tried to instil into him a contempt for his surroundings; I required of him a disdainful and complete break with those surroundings. I frightened him with my passionate affection; I reduced him to tears, to hysterics. He was a simple and devoted soul; but when he devoted himself to me entirely I began to hate him immediately and repulsed him-as though all I needed him for was to win a victory over him, to subjugate him and nothing else. But I could not subjugate all of them; my friend was not at all like them either, he was, in

fact, a rare exception. The first thing I did on leaving school was to give up the special job for which I had been destined so as to break all ties, to curse my past and shake the dust from off my feet... And goodness knows why, after all that, I should go trudging off to Simonov's!

Early next morning I roused myself and jumped out of bed with excitement, as though it were all about to happen at once. But I believed that some radical change in my life was coming, and would inevitably come that day. Owing to its rarity, perhaps, any external event, however trivial, always made me feel as though some radical change in my life were at hand. I went to the office, however, as usual, but sneaked away home two hours earlier to get ready. The great thing, I thought, is not to be the first to arrive, or they will think I am overjoyed at coming. But there were thousands of such great points to consider, and they all agitated and overwhelmed me. I polished my boots a second time with my own hands; nothing in the world would have induced Apollon to clean them twice a day, as he considered that it was more than his duties required of him. I stole the brushes to clean them from the passage, being careful he should not detect it, for fear of his contempt. Then I minutely examined my clothes and thought that everything looked old, worn and threadbare. I had let myself get too slovenly. My uniform, perhaps, was tidy, but I could not go out to dinner in my uniform. The worst of it was that on the knee of my trousers was a big yellow stain. I had a foreboding that that stain would deprive me of nine-tenths of my personal dignity. I knew, too, that it was very poor to think so. "But this is no time for thinking: now I am in for the real thing," I thought, and my heart sank. I knew, too, perfectly well even then, that I was monstrously exaggerating the facts. But how could I help it? I could not control myself and was already shaking with fever. With despair I pictured to myself how coldly and disdainfully that "scoundrel" Zverkov would meet me; with what dull-witted, invincible contempt the blockhead Trudolyubov would look at me; with what impudent rudeness the insect Ferfitchkin would snigger at me in order to curry favour with Zverkov; how completely Simonov would take it all in, and how he would despise me for the abjectness of my vanity and lack of spirit-and, worst of all, how paltry, UNLITERARY, commonplace it would all be. Of course, the best thing would be not to go at all. But that was most impossible of all: if I feel impelled to do anything, I seem to be pitchforked into it. I should have jeered at myself ever afterwards: "So you funk'd it, you funk'd it, you funk'd the REAL THING!" On the contrary, I passionately longed to show all that

"rabble" that I was by no means such a spiritless creature as I seemed to myself. What is more, even in the acutest paroxysm of this cowardly fever, I dreamed of getting the upper hand, of dominating them, carrying them away, making them like me-if only for my "elevation of thought and unmistakable wit." They would abandon Zverkov, he would sit on one side, silent and ashamed, while I should crush him. Then, perhaps, we would be reconciled and drink to our everlasting friendship; but what was most bitter and humiliating for me was that I knew even then, knew fully and for certain, that I needed nothing of all this really, that I did not really want to crush, to subdue, to attract them, and that I did not care a straw really for the result, even if I did achieve it. Oh, how I prayed for the day to pass quickly! In unutterable anguish I went to the window, opened the movable pane and looked out into the troubled darkness of the thickly falling wet snow. At last my wretched little clock hissed out five. I seized my hat and, trying not to look at Apollon, who had been all day expecting his month's wages, but in his foolishness was unwilling to be the first to speak about it, I slipped between him and the door and, jumping into a high-class sledge, on which I spent my last half rouble, I drove up in grand style to the Hotel de Paris.

IV

I had been certain the day before that I should be the first to arrive. But it was not a question of being the first to arrive. Not only were they not there, but I had difficulty in finding our room. The table was not laid even. What did it mean? After a good many questions I elicited from the waiters that the dinner had been ordered not for five, but for six o'clock. This was confirmed at the buffet too. I felt really ashamed to go on questioning them. It was only twenty-five minutes past five. If they changed the dinner hour they ought at least to have let me know-that is what the post is for, and not to have put me in an absurd position in my own eyes and... and even before the waiters. I sat down; the servant began laying the table; I felt even more humiliated when he was present. Towards six o'clock they brought in candles, though there were lamps burning in the room. It had not occurred to the waiter, however, to bring them in at once when I arrived. In the next room two gloomy, angry-looking persons were eating their dinners in silence at two different tables. There was a great deal of noise, even shouting, in a room further away; one could hear the laughter of a crowd of people, and nasty little shrieks in French: there were ladies at the dinner. It was sickening, in fact. I rarely passed more unpleasant moments, so much so that when they did arrive all together punctually at six I was overjoyed to see them, as though they were my deliverers, and even forgot that it was incumbent upon me to show resentment.

Zverkov walked in at the head of them; evidently he was the leading spirit. He and all of them were laughing; but, seeing me, Zverkov drew himself up a little, walked up to me deliberately with a slight, rather jaunty bend from the waist. He shook hands with me in a friendly, but not over-friendly, fashion, with a sort of circumspect courtesy like that of a General, as though in giving me his hand he were warding off something. I had imagined, on the contrary, that on coming in he would at once break into his habitual thin, shrill laugh and fall to making his insipid jokes and witticisms. I had been preparing for them ever since the previous day, but I had not expected such condescension, such high-official courtesy. So, then, he felt himself ineffably superior to me in every respect! If he only meant to insult me by that high-official tone, it would not matter, I thought-I could pay him back for it one way or another. But what if, in reality, without the least desire to be

offensive, that sheephead had a notion in earnest that he was superior to me and could only look at me in a patronising way? The very supposition made me gasp.

"I was surprised to hear of your desire to join us," he began, lisping and drawling, which was something new. "You and I seem to have seen nothing of one another. You fight shy of us. You shouldn't. We are not such terrible people as you think. Well, anyway, I am glad to renew our acquaintance."

And he turned carelessly to put down his hat on the window.

"Have you been waiting long?" Trudolyubov inquired.

"I arrived at five o'clock as you told me yesterday," I answered aloud, with an irritability that threatened an explosion.

"Didn't you let him know that we had changed the hour?" said Trudolyubov to Simonov.

"No, I didn't. I forgot," the latter replied, with no sign of regret, and without even apologising to me he went off to order the HORS D'OEUVRE.

"So you've been here a whole hour? Oh, poor fellow!" Zverkov cried ironically, for to his notions this was bound to be extremely funny. That rascal Ferfitchkin followed with his nasty little snigger like a puppy yapping. My position struck him, too, as exquisitely ludicrous and embarrassing.

"It isn't funny at all!" I cried to Ferfitchkin, more and more irritated. "It wasn't my fault, but other people's. They neglected to let me know. It was... it was... it was simply absurd."

"It's not only absurd, but something else as well," muttered Trudolyubov, naively taking my part. "You are not hard enough upon it. It was simply rudeness-unintentional, of course. And how could Simonov... h'm!"

"If a trick like that had been played on me," observed Ferfitchkin, "I should..."

"But you should have ordered something for yourself," Zverkov interrupted, "or simply asked for dinner without waiting for us."

"You will allow that I might have done that without your permission," I rapped out. "If I waited, it was..."

"Let us sit down, gentlemen," cried Simonov, coming in. "Everything is ready; I can answer for the champagne; it is capitally frozen... You see, I did not know your address, where was I to look for you?" he suddenly turned to me, but again he seemed to avoid looking at me. Evidently he had something against me. It must have been what happened yesterday.

All sat down; I did the same. It was a round table. Trudolyubov was on

my left, Simonov on my right, Zverkov was sitting opposite, Ferfitchkin next to him, between him and Trudolyubov.

"Tell me, are you... in a government office?" Zverkov went on attending to me. Seeing that I was embarrassed he seriously thought that he ought to be friendly to me, and, so to speak, cheer me up.

"Does he want me to throw a bottle at his head?" I thought, in a fury. In my novel surroundings I was unnaturally ready to be irritated.

"In the N- office," I answered jerkily, with my eyes on my plate.

"And ha-ave you a go-od berth? I say, what ma-a-de you leave your original job?"

"What ma-a-de me was that I wanted to leave my original job," I drawled more than he, hardly able to control myself. Ferfitchkin went off into a guffaw. Simonov looked at me ironically. Trudolyubov left off eating and began looking at me with curiosity.

Zverkov winced, but he tried not to notice it.

"And the remuneration?"

"What remuneration?"

"I mean, your sa-a-lary?"

"Why are you cross-examining me?" However, I told him at once what my salary was. I turned horribly red.

"It is not very handsome," Zverkov observed majestically.

"Yes, you can't afford to dine at cafes on that," Ferfitchkin added insolently.

"To my thinking it's very poor," Trudolyubov observed gravely.

"And how thin you have grown! How you have changed!" added Zverkov, with a shade of venom in his voice, scanning me and my attire with a sort of insolent compassion.

"Oh, spare his blushes," cried Ferfitchkin, sniggering.

"My dear sir, allow me to tell you I am not blushing," I broke out at last; "do you hear? I am dining here, at this cafe, at my own expense, not at other people's-note that, Mr. Ferfitchkin."

"Wha-at? Isn't every one here dining at his own expense? You would seem to be..." Ferfitchkin flew out at me, turning as red as a lobster, and looking me in the face with fury.

"Tha-at," I answered, feeling I had gone too far, "and I imagine it would be better to talk of something more intelligent."

"You intend to show off your intelligence, I suppose?"

"Don't disturb yourself, that would be quite out of place here."

"Why are you clacking away like that, my good sir, eh? Have you gone out of your wits in your office?"

"Enough, gentlemen, enough!" Zverkov cried, authoritatively.

"How stupid it is!" muttered Simonov.

"It really is stupid. We have met here, a company of friends, for a farewell dinner to a comrade and you carry on an altercation," said Trudolyubov, rudely addressing himself to me alone. "You invited yourself to join us, so don't disturb the general harmony."

"Enough, enough!" cried Zverkov. "Give over, gentlemen, it's out of place. Better let me tell you how I nearly got married the day before yesterday..."

And then followed a burlesque narrative of how this gentleman had almost been married two days before. There was not a word about the marriage, however, but the story was adorned with generals, colonels and kammer-junkers, while Zverkov almost took the lead among them. It was greeted with approving laughter; Ferfitchkin positively squealed.

No one paid any attention to me, and I sat crushed and humiliated.

"Good Heavens, these are not the people for me!" I thought. "And what a fool I have made of myself before them! I let Ferfitchkin go too far, though. The brutes imagine they are doing me an honour in letting me sit down with them. They don't understand that it's an honour to them and not to me! I've grown thinner! My clothes! Oh, damn my trousers! Zverkov noticed the yellow stain on the knee as soon as he came in... But what's the use! I must get up at once, this very minute, take my hat and simply go without a word... with contempt! And tomorrow I can send a challenge. The scoundrels! As though I cared about the seven roubles. They may think... Damn it! I don't care about the seven roubles. I'll go this minute!"

Of course I remained. I drank sherry and Lafitte by the glassful in my discomfiture. Being unaccustomed to it, I was quickly affected. My annoyance increased as the wine went to my head. I longed all at once to insult them all in a most flagrant manner and then go away. To seize the moment and show what I could do, so that they would say, "He's clever, though he is absurd," and... and... in fact, damn them all!

I scanned them all insolently with my drowsy eyes. But they seemed to have forgotten me altogether. They were noisy, vociferous, cheerful. Zverkov was talking all the time. I began listening. Zverkov was talking of some

exuberant lady whom he had at last led on to declaring her love (of course, he was lying like a horse), and how he had been helped in this affair by an intimate friend of his, a Prince Kolya, an officer in the hussars, who had three thousand serfs.

"And yet this Kolya, who has three thousand serfs, has not put in an appearance here tonight to see you off," I cut in suddenly.

For one minute every one was silent. "You are drunk already." Trudolyubov deigned to notice me at last, glancing contemptuously in my direction. Zverkov, without a word, examined me as though I were an insect. I dropped my eyes. Simonov made haste to fill up the glasses with champagne.

Trudolyubov raised his glass, as did everyone else but me.

"Your health and good luck on the journey!" he cried to Zverkov. "To old times, to our future, hurrah!"

They all tossed off their glasses, and crowded round Zverkov to kiss him. I did not move; my full glass stood untouched before me.

"Why, aren't you going to drink it?" roared Trudolyubov, losing patience and turning menacingly to me.

"I want to make a speech separately, on my own account... and then I'll drink it, Mr. Trudolyubov."

"Spiteful brute!" muttered Simonov. I drew myself up in my chair and feverishly seized my glass, prepared for something extraordinary, though I did not know myself precisely what I was going to say.

"SILENCE!" cried Ferfitchkin. "Now for a display of wit!"

Zverkov waited very gravely, knowing what was coming.

"Mr. Lieutenant Zverkov," I began, "let me tell you that I hate phrases, phrasemongers and men in corsets... that's the first point, and there is a second one to follow it."

There was a general stir.

"The second point is: I hate ribaldry and ribald talkers. Especially ribald talkers! The third point: I love justice, truth and honesty." I went on almost mechanically, for I was beginning to shiver with horror myself and had no idea how I came to be talking like this. "I love thought, Monsieur Zverkov; I love true comradeship, on an equal footing and not... H'm... I love... But, however, why not? I will drink your health, too, Mr. Zverkov. Seduce the Circassian girls, shoot the enemies of the fatherland and... and... to your health, Monsieur Zverkov!"

Zverkov got up from his seat, bowed to me and said:

"I am very much obliged to you." He was frightfully offended and turned pale.

"Damn the fellow!" roared Trudolyubov, bringing his fist down on the table.

"Well, he wants a punch in the face for that," squealed Ferfitchkin.

"We ought to turn him out," muttered Simonov.

"Not a word, gentlemen, not a movement!" cried Zverkov solemnly, checking the general indignation. "I thank you all, but I can show him for myself how much value I attach to his words."

"Mr. Ferfitchkin, you will give me satisfaction tomorrow for your words just now!" I said aloud, turning with dignity to Ferfitchkin.

"A duel, you mean? Certainly," he answered. But probably I was so ridiculous as I challenged him and it was so out of keeping with my appearance that everyone including Ferfitchkin was prostrate with laughter.

"Yes, let him alone, of course! He is quite drunk," Trudolyubov said with disgust.

"I shall never forgive myself for letting him join us," Simonov muttered again.

"Now is the time to throw a bottle at their heads," I thought to myself. I picked up the bottle... and filled my glass... "No, I'd better sit on to the end," I went on thinking; "you would be pleased, my friends, if I went away. Nothing will induce me to go. I'll go on sitting here and drinking to the end, on purpose, as a sign that I don't think you of the slightest consequence. I will go on sitting and drinking, because this is a public-house and I paid my entrance money. I'll sit here and drink, for I look upon you as so many pawns, as inanimate pawns. I'll sit here and drink... and sing if I want to, yes, sing, for I have the right to... to sing... H'm!"

But I did not sing. I simply tried not to look at any of them. I assumed most unconcerned attitudes and waited with impatience for them to speak FIRST. But alas, they did not address me! And oh, how I wished, how I wished at that moment to be reconciled to them! It struck eight, at last nine. They moved from the table to the sofa. Zverkov stretched himself on a lounge and put one foot on a round table. Wine was brought there. He did, as a fact, order three bottles on his own account. I, of course, was not invited to join them. They all sat round him on the sofa. They listened to him, almost with reverence. It was evident that they were fond of him. "What for? What

for?" I wondered. From time to time they were moved to drunken enthusiasm and kissed each other. They talked of the Caucasus, of the nature of true passion, of snug berths in the service, of the income of an hussar called Podharzhevsky, whom none of them knew personally, and rejoiced in the largeness of it, of the extraordinary grace and beauty of a Princess D., whom none of them had ever seen; then it came to Shakespeare's being immortal.

I smiled contemptuously and walked up and down the other side of the room, opposite the sofa, from the table to the stove and back again. I tried my very utmost to show them that I could do without them, and yet I purposely made a noise with my boots, thumping with my heels. But it was all in vain. They paid no attention. I had the patience to walk up and down in front of them from eight o'clock till eleven, in the same place, from the table to the stove and back again. "I walk up and down to please myself and no one can prevent me." The waiter who came into the room stopped, from time to time, to look at me. I was somewhat giddy from turning round so often; at moments it seemed to me that I was in delirium. During those three hours I was three times soaked with sweat and dry again. At times, with an intense, acute pang I was stabbed to the heart by the thought that ten years, twenty years, forty years would pass, and that even in forty years I would remember with loathing and humiliation those filthiest, most ludicrous, and most awful moments of my life. No one could have gone out of his way to degrade himself more shamelessly, and I fully realised it, fully, and yet I went on pacing up and down from the table to the stove. "Oh, if you only knew what thoughts and feelings I am capable of, how cultured I am!" I thought at moments, mentally addressing the sofa on which my enemies were sitting. But my enemies behaved as though I were not in the room. Once-only once-they turned towards me, just when Zverkov was talking about Shakespeare, and I suddenly gave a contemptuous laugh. I laughed in such an affected and disgusting way that they all at once broke off their conversation, and silently and gravely for two minutes watched me walking up and down from the table to the stove, TAKING NO NOTICE OF THEM. But nothing came of it: they said nothing, and two minutes later they ceased to notice me again. It struck eleven.

"Friends," cried Zverkov getting up from the sofa, "let us all be off now, THERE!"

"Of course, of course," the others assented. I turned sharply to Zverkov. I was so harassed, so exhausted, that I would have cut my throat to put an end

to it. I was in a fever; my hair, soaked with perspiration, stuck to my forehead and temples.

"Zverkov, I beg your pardon," I said abruptly and resolutely. "Ferfitchkin, yours too, and everyone's, everyone's: I have insulted you all!"

"Aha! A duel is not in your line, old man," Ferfitchkin hissed venomously.

It sent a sharp pang to my heart.

"No, it's not the duel I am afraid of, Ferfitchkin! I am ready to fight you tomorrow, after we are reconciled. I insist upon it, in fact, and you cannot refuse. I want to show you that I am not afraid of a duel. You shall fire first and I shall fire into the air."

"He is comforting himself," said Simonov.

"He's simply raving," said Trudolyubov.

"But let us pass. Why are you barring our way? What do you want?" Zverkov answered disdainfully.

They were all flushed, their eyes were bright: they had been drinking heavily.

"I ask for your friendship, Zverkov; I insulted you, but..."

"Insulted? YOU insulted ME? Understand, sir, that you never, under any circumstances, could possibly insult ME."

"And that's enough for you. Out of the way!" concluded Trudolyubov.

"Olympia is mine, friends, that's agreed!" cried Zverkov.

"We won't dispute your right, we won't dispute your right," the others answered, laughing.

I stood as though spat upon. The party went noisily out of the room. Trudolyubov struck up some stupid song. Simonov remained behind for a moment to tip the waiters. I suddenly went up to him.

"Simonov! give me six roubles!" I said, with desperate resolution.

He looked at me in extreme amazement, with vacant eyes. He, too, was drunk.

"You don't mean you are coming with us?"

"Yes."

"I've no money," he snapped out, and with a scornful laugh he went out of the room.

I clutched at his overcoat. It was a nightmare.

"Simonov, I saw you had money. Why do you refuse me? Am I a scoundrel? Beware of refusing me: if you knew, if you knew why I am

asking! My whole future, my whole plans depend upon it!"

Simonov pulled out the money and almost flung it at me.

"Take it, if you have no sense of shame!" he pronounced pitilessly, and ran to overtake them.

I was left for a moment alone. Disorder, the remains of dinner, a broken wine-glass on the floor, spilt wine, cigarette ends, fumes of drink and delirium in my brain, an agonising misery in my heart and finally the waiter, who had seen and heard all and was looking inquisitively into my face.

"I am going there!" I cried. "Either they shall all go down on their knees to beg for my friendship, or I will give Zverkov a slap in the face!"

"So this is it, this is it at last-contact with real life," I muttered as I ran headlong downstairs. "This is very different from the Pope's leaving Rome and going to Brazil, very different from the ball on Lake Como!"

"You are a scoundrel," a thought flashed through my mind, "if you laugh at this now."

"No matter!" I cried, answering myself. "Now everything is lost!"

There was no trace to be seen of them, but that made no difference-I knew where they had gone.

At the steps was standing a solitary night sledge-driver in a rough peasant coat, powdered over with the still falling, wet, and as it were warm, snow. It was hot and steamy. The little shaggy piebald horse was also covered with snow and coughing, I remember that very well. I made a rush for the roughly made sledge; but as soon as I raised my foot to get into it, the recollection of how Simonov had just given me six roubles seemed to double me up and I tumbled into the sledge like a sack.

"No, I must do a great deal to make up for all that," I cried. "But I will make up for it or perish on the spot this very night. Start!"

We set off. There was a perfect whirl in my head.

"They won't go down on their knees to beg for my friendship. That is a mirage, cheap mirage, revolting, romantic and fantastical-that's another ball on Lake Como. And so I am bound to slap Zverkov's face! It is my duty to. And so it is settled; I am flying to give him a slap in the face. Hurry up!"

The driver tugged at the reins.

"As soon as I go in I'll give it him. Ought I before giving him the slap to say a few words by way of preface? No. I'll simply go in and give it him. They will all be sitting in the drawing-room, and he with Olympia on the sofa. That damned Olympia! She laughed at my looks on one occasion and refused me. I'll pull Olympia's hair, pull Zverkov's ears! No, better one ear, and pull him by it round the room. Maybe they will all begin beating me and will kick me out. That's most likely, indeed. No matter! Anyway, I shall first slap him; the initiative will be mine; and by the laws of honour that is everything: he will be branded and cannot wipe off the slap by any blows, by nothing but a duel. He will be forced to fight. And let them beat me now. Let them, the ungrateful wretches! Trudolyubov will beat me hardest, he is so

strong; Ferfitchkin will be sure to catch hold sideways and tug at my hair. But no matter, no matter! That's what I am going for. The blockheads will be forced at last to see the tragedy of it all! When they drag me to the door I shall call out to them that in reality they are not worth my little finger. Get on, driver, get on!" I cried to the driver. He started and flicked his whip, I shouted so savagely.

"We shall fight at daybreak, that's a settled thing. I've done with the office. Ferfitchkin made a joke about it just now. But where can I get pistols? Nonsense! I'll get my salary in advance and buy them. And powder, and bullets? That's the second's business. And how can it all be done by daybreak? and where am I to get a second? I have no friends. Nonsense!" I cried, lashing myself up more and more. "It's of no consequence! The first person I meet in the street is bound to be my second, just as he would be bound to pull a drowning man out of water. The most eccentric things may happen. Even if I were to ask the director himself to be my second tomorrow, he would be bound to consent, if only from a feeling of chivalry, and to keep the secret! Anton Antonitch..."

The fact is, that at that very minute the disgusting absurdity of my plan and the other side of the question was clearer and more vivid to my imagination than it could be to anyone on earth. But...

"Get on, driver, get on, you rascal, get on!"

"Ugh, sir!" said the son of toil.

Cold shivers suddenly ran down me. Wouldn't it be better... to go straight home? My God, my God! Why did I invite myself to this dinner yesterday? But no, it's impossible. And my walking up and down for three hours from the table to the stove? No, they, they and no one else must pay for my walking up and down! They must wipe out this dishonour! Drive on!

And what if they give me into custody? They won't dare! They'll be afraid of the scandal. And what if Zverkov is so contemptuous that he refuses to fight a duel? He is sure to; but in that case I'll show them... I will turn up at the posting station when he's setting off tomorrow, I'll catch him by the leg, I'll pull off his coat when he gets into the carriage. I'll get my teeth into his hand, I'll bite him. "See what lengths you can drive a desperate man to!" He may hit me on the head and they may belabour me from behind. I will shout to the assembled multitude: "Look at this young puppy who is driving off to captivate the Circassian girls after letting me spit in his face!"

Of course, after that everything will be over! The office will have

vanished off the face of the earth. I shall be arrested, I shall be tried, I shall be dismissed from the service, thrown in prison, sent to Siberia. Never mind! In fifteen years when they let me out of prison I will trudge off to him, a beggar, in rags. I shall find him in some provincial town. He will be married and happy. He will have a grown-up daughter... I shall say to him: "Look, monster, at my hollow cheeks and my rags! I've lost everything-my career, my happiness, art, science, THE WOMAN I LOVED, and all through you. Here are pistols. I have come to discharge my pistol and... and I... forgive you. Then I shall fire into the air and he will hear nothing more of me..."

I was actually on the point of tears, though I knew perfectly well at that moment that all this was out of Pushkin's SILVIO and Lermontov's MASQUERADE. And all at once I felt horribly ashamed, so ashamed that I stopped the horse, got out of the sledge, and stood still in the snow in the middle of the street. The driver gazed at me, sighing and astonished.

What was I to do? I could not go on there-it was evidently stupid, and I could not leave things as they were, because that would seem as though... Heavens, how could I leave things! And after such insults! "No!" I cried, throwing myself into the sledge again. "It is ordained! It is fate! Drive on, drive on!"

And in my impatience I punched the sledge-driver on the back of the neck.

"What are you up to? What are you hitting me for?" the peasant shouted, but he whipped up his nag so that it began kicking.

The wet snow was falling in big flakes; I unbuttoned myself, regardless of it. I forgot everything else, for I had finally decided on the slap, and felt with horror that it was going to happen NOW, AT ONCE, and that NO FORCE COULD STOP IT. The deserted street lamps gleamed sullenly in the snowy darkness like torches at a funeral. The snow drifted under my great-coat, under my coat, under my cravat, and melted there. I did not wrap myself up-all was lost, anyway.

At last we arrived. I jumped out, almost unconscious, ran up the steps and began knocking and kicking at the door. I felt fearfully weak, particularly in my legs and knees. The door was opened quickly as though they knew I was coming. As a fact, Simonov had warned them that perhaps another gentleman would arrive, and this was a place in which one had to give notice and to observe certain precautions. It was one of those "millinery establishments" which were abolished by the police a good time ago. By day it really was a

shop; but at night, if one had an introduction, one might visit it for other purposes.

I walked rapidly through the dark shop into the familiar drawing-room, where there was only one candle burning, and stood still in amazement: there was no one there. "Where are they?" I asked somebody. But by now, of course, they had separated. Before me was standing a person with a stupid smile, the "madam" herself, who had seen me before. A minute later a door opened and another person came in.

Taking no notice of anything I strode about the room, and, I believe, I talked to myself. I felt as though I had been saved from death and was conscious of this, joyfully, all over: I should have given that slap, I should certainly, certainly have given it! But now they were not here and... everything had vanished and changed! I looked round. I could not realise my condition yet. I looked mechanically at the girl who had come in: and had a glimpse of a fresh, young, rather pale face, with straight, dark eyebrows, and with grave, as it were wondering, eyes that attracted me at once; I should have hated her if she had been smiling. I began looking at her more intently and, as it were, with effort. I had not fully collected my thoughts. There was something simple and good-natured in her face, but something strangely grave. I am sure that this stood in her way here, and no one of those fools had noticed her. She could not, however, have been called a beauty, though she was tall, strong-looking, and well built. She was very simply dressed. Something loathsome stirred within me. I went straight up to her.

I chanced to look into the glass. My harassed face struck me as revolting in the extreme, pale, angry, abject, with dishevelled hair. "No matter, I am glad of it," I thought; "I am glad that I shall seem repulsive to her; I like that."

VI

... Somewhere behind a screen a clock began wheezing, as though oppressed by something, as though someone were strangling it. After an unnaturally prolonged wheezing there followed a shrill, nasty, and as it were unexpectedly rapid, chime-as though someone were suddenly jumping forward. It struck two. I woke up, though I had indeed not been asleep but lying half-conscious.

It was almost completely dark in the narrow, cramped, low-pitched room, cumbered up with an enormous wardrobe and piles of cardboard boxes and all sorts of frippery and litter. The candle end that had been burning on the table was going out and gave a faint flicker from time to time. In a few minutes there would be complete darkness.

I was not long in coming to myself; everything came back to my mind at once, without an effort, as though it had been in ambush to pounce upon me again. And, indeed, even while I was unconscious a point seemed continually to remain in my memory unforgotten, and round it my dreams moved drearily. But strange to say, everything that had happened to me in that day seemed to me now, on waking, to be in the far, far away past, as though I had long, long ago lived all that down.

My head was full of fumes. Something seemed to be hovering over me, rousing me, exciting me, and making me restless. Misery and spite seemed surging up in me again and seeking an outlet. Suddenly I saw beside me two wide open eyes scrutinising me curiously and persistently. The look in those eyes was coldly detached, sullen, as it were utterly remote; it weighed upon me.

A grim idea came into my brain and passed all over my body, as a horrible sensation, such as one feels when one goes into a damp and mouldy cellar. There was something unnatural in those two eyes, beginning to look at me only now. I recalled, too, that during those two hours I had not said a single word to this creature, and had, in fact, considered it utterly superfluous; in fact, the silence had for some reason gratified me. Now I suddenly realised vividly the hideous idea-revolting as a spider-of vice, which, without love, grossly and shamelessly begins with that in which true love finds its consummation. For a long time we gazed at each other like that, but she did not drop her eyes before mine and her expression did not change,

so that at last I felt uncomfortable.

"What is your name?" I asked abruptly, to put an end to it.

"Liza," she answered almost in a whisper, but somehow far from graciously, and she turned her eyes away.

I was silent.

"What weather! The snow... it's disgusting!" I said, almost to myself, putting my arm under my head despondently, and gazing at the ceiling.

She made no answer. This was horrible.

"Have you always lived in Petersburg?" I asked a minute later, almost angrily, turning my head slightly towards her.

"No."

"Where do you come from?"

"From Riga," she answered reluctantly.

"Are you a German?"

"No, Russian."

"Have you been here long?"

"Where?"

"In this house?"

"A fortnight."

She spoke more and more jerkily. The candle went out; I could no longer distinguish her face.

"Have you a father and mother?"

"Yes... no... I have."

"Where are they?"

"There... in Riga."

"What are they?"

"Oh, nothing."

"Nothing? Why, what class are they?"

"Tradespeople."

"Have you always lived with them?"

"Yes."

"How old are you?"

"Twenty."

"Why did you leave them?"

"Oh, for no reason."

That answer meant "Let me alone; I feel sick, sad."

We were silent.

God knows why I did not go away. I felt myself more and more sick and dreary. The images of the previous day began of themselves, apart from my will, flitting through my memory in confusion. I suddenly recalled something I had seen that morning when, full of anxious thoughts, I was hurrying to the office.

"I saw them carrying a coffin out yesterday and they nearly dropped it," I suddenly said aloud, not that I desired to open the conversation, but as it were by accident.

"A coffin?"

"Yes, in the Haymarket; they were bringing it up out of a cellar."

"From a cellar?"

"Not from a cellar, but a basement. Oh, you know... down below... from a house of ill-fame. It was filthy all round... Egg-shells, litter... a stench. It was loathsome."

Silence.

"A nasty day to be buried," I began, simply to avoid being silent.

"Nasty, in what way?"

"The snow, the wet." (I yawned.)

"It makes no difference," she said suddenly, after a brief silence.

"No, it's horrid." (I yawned again). "The gravediggers must have sworn at getting drenched by the snow. And there must have been water in the grave."

"Why water in the grave?" she asked, with a sort of curiosity, but speaking even more harshly and abruptly than before.

I suddenly began to feel provoked.

"Why, there must have been water at the bottom a foot deep. You can't dig a dry grave in Volkovo Cemetery."

"Why?"

"Why? Why, the place is waterlogged. It's a regular marsh. So they bury them in water. I've seen it myself... many times."

(I had never seen it once, indeed I had never been in Volkovo, and had only heard stories of it.)

"Do you mean to say, you don't mind how you die?"

"But why should I die?" she answered, as though defending herself.

"Why, some day you will die, and you will die just the same as that dead woman. She was... a girl like you. She died of consumption."

"A wench would have died in hospital..." (She knows all about it already: she said "wench," not "girl.")

"She was in debt to her madam," I retorted, more and more provoked by the discussion; "and went on earning money for her up to the end, though she was in consumption. Some sledge-drivers standing by were talking about her to some soldiers and telling them so. No doubt they knew her. They were laughing. They were going to meet in a pot-house to drink to her memory."

A great deal of this was my invention. Silence followed, profound silence. She did not stir.

"And is it better to die in a hospital?"

"Isn't it just the same? Besides, why should I die?" she added irritably.

"If not now, a little later."

"Why a little later?"

"Why, indeed? Now you are young, pretty, fresh, you fetch a high price. But after another year of this life you will be very different-you will go off."

"In a year?"

"Anyway, in a year you will be worth less," I continued malignantly. "You will go from here to something lower, another house; a year later-to a third, lower and lower, and in seven years you will come to a basement in the Haymarket. That will be if you were lucky. But it would be much worse if you got some disease, consumption, say... and caught a chill, or something or other. It's not easy to get over an illness in your way of life. If you catch anything you may not get rid of it. And so you would die."

"Oh, well, then I shall die," she answered, quite vindictively, and she made a quick movement.

"But one is sorry."

"Sorry for whom?"

"Sorry for life." Silence.

"Have you been engaged to be married? Eh?"

"What's that to you?"

"Oh, I am not cross-examining you. It's nothing to me. Why are you so cross? Of course you may have had your own troubles. What is it to me? It's simply that I felt sorry."

"Sorry for whom?"

"Sorry for you."

"No need," she whispered hardly audibly, and again made a faint movement.

That incensed me at once. What! I was so gentle with her, and she...

"Why, do you think that you are on the right path?"

"I don't think anything."

"That's what's wrong, that you don't think. Realise it while there is still time. There still is time. You are still young, good-looking; you might love, be married, be happy..."

"Not all married women are happy," she snapped out in the rude abrupt tone she had used at first.

"Not all, of course, but anyway it is much better than the life here. Infinitely better. Besides, with love one can live even without happiness. Even in sorrow life is sweet; life is sweet, however one lives. But here what is there but... foulness? Phew!"

I turned away with disgust; I was no longer reasoning coldly. I began to feel myself what I was saying and warmed to the subject. I was already longing to expound the cherished ideas I had brooded over in my corner. Something suddenly flared up in me. An object had appeared before me.

"Never mind my being here, I am not an example for you. I am, perhaps, worse than you are. I was drunk when I came here, though," I hastened, however, to say in self-defence. "Besides, a man is no example for a woman. It's a different thing. I may degrade and defile myself, but I am not anyone's slave. I come and go, and that's an end of it. I shake it off, and I am a different man. But you are a slave from the start. Yes, a slave! You give up everything, your whole freedom. If you want to break your chains afterwards, you won't be able to; you will be more and more fast in the snares. It is an accursed bondage. I know it. I won't speak of anything else, maybe you won't understand, but tell me: no doubt you are in debt to your madam? There, you see," I added, though she made no answer, but only listened in silence, entirely absorbed, "that's a bondage for you! You will never buy your freedom. They will see to that. It's like selling your soul to the devil... And besides... perhaps, I too, am just as unlucky-how do you know-and wallow in the mud on purpose, out of misery? You know, men take to drink from grief; well, maybe I am here from grief. Come, tell me, what is there good here? Here you and I... came together... just now and did not say one word to one another all the time, and it was only afterwards you began staring at me like a wild creature, and I at you. Is that loving? Is that how one human being should meet another? It's hideous, that's what it is!"

"Yes!" she assented sharply and hurriedly.

I was positively astounded by the promptitude of this "Yes." So the same thought may have been straying through her mind when she was staring at me

just before. So she, too, was capable of certain thoughts? "Damn it all, this was interesting, this was a point of likeness!" I thought, almost rubbing my hands. And indeed it's easy to turn a young soul like that!

It was the exercise of my power that attracted me most.

She turned her head nearer to me, and it seemed to me in the darkness that she propped herself on her arm. Perhaps she was scrutinising me. How I regretted that I could not see her eyes. I heard her deep breathing.

"Why have you come here?" I asked her, with a note of authority already in my voice.

"Oh, I don't know."

"But how nice it would be to be living in your father's house! It's warm and free; you have a home of your own."

"But what if it's worse than this?"

"I must take the right tone," flashed through my mind. "I may not get far with sentimentality." But it was only a momentary thought. I swear she really did interest me. Besides, I was exhausted and moody. And cunning so easily goes hand-in-hand with feeling.

"Who denies it!" I hastened to answer. "Anything may happen. I am convinced that someone has wronged you, and that you are more sinned against than sinning. Of course, I know nothing of your story, but it's not likely a girl like you has come here of her own inclination..."

"A girl like me?" she whispered, hardly audibly; but I heard it.

Damn it all, I was flattering her. That was horrid. But perhaps it was a good thing... She was silent.

"See, Liza, I will tell you about myself. If I had had a home from childhood, I shouldn't be what I am now. I often think that. However bad it may be at home, anyway they are your father and mother, and not enemies, strangers. Once a year at least, they'll show their love of you. Anyway, you know you are at home. I grew up without a home; and perhaps that's why I've turned so... unfeeling."

I waited again. "Perhaps she doesn't understand," I thought, "and, indeed, it is absurd-it's moralising."

"If I were a father and had a daughter, I believe I should love my daughter more than my sons, really," I began indirectly, as though talking of something else, to distract her attention. I must confess I blushed.

"Why so?" she asked.

Ah! so she was listening!

"I don't know, Liza. I knew a father who was a stern, austere man, but used to go down on his knees to his daughter, used to kiss her hands, her feet, he couldn't make enough of her, really. When she danced at parties he used to stand for five hours at a stretch, gazing at her. He was mad over her: I understand that! She would fall asleep tired at night, and he would wake to kiss her in her sleep and make the sign of the cross over her. He would go about in a dirty old coat, he was stingy to everyone else, but would spend his last penny for her, giving her expensive presents, and it was his greatest delight when she was pleased with what he gave her. Fathers always love their daughters more than the mothers do. Some girls live happily at home! And I believe I should never let my daughters marry."

"What next?" she said, with a faint smile.

"I should be jealous, I really should. To think that she should kiss anyone else! That she should love a stranger more than her father! It's painful to imagine it. Of course, that's all nonsense, of course every father would be reasonable at last. But I believe before I should let her marry, I should worry myself to death; I should find fault with all her suitors. But I should end by letting her marry whom she herself loved. The one whom the daughter loves always seems the worst to the father, you know. That is always so. So many family troubles come from that."

"Some are glad to sell their daughters, rather than marrying them honourably."

Ah, so that was it!

"Such a thing, Liza, happens in those accursed families in which there is neither love nor God," I retorted warmly, "and where there is no love, there is no sense either. There are such families, it's true, but I am not speaking of them. You must have seen wickedness in your own family, if you talk like that. Truly, you must have been unlucky. H'm!... that sort of thing mostly comes about through poverty."

"And is it any better with the gentry? Even among the poor, honest people who live happily?"

"H'm... yes. Perhaps. Another thing, Liza, man is fond of reckoning up his troubles, but does not count his joys. If he counted them up as he ought, he would see that every lot has enough happiness provided for it. And what if all goes well with the family, if the blessing of God is upon it, if the husband is a good one, loves you, cherishes you, never leaves you! There is happiness in such a family! Even sometimes there is happiness in the midst of sorrow;

and indeed sorrow is everywhere. If you marry YOU WILL FIND OUT FOR YOURSELF. But think of the first years of married life with one you love: what happiness, what happiness there sometimes is in it! And indeed it's the ordinary thing. In those early days even quarrels with one's husband end happily. Some women get up quarrels with their husbands just because they love them. Indeed, I knew a woman like that: she seemed to say that because she loved him, she would torment him and make him feel it. You know that you may torment a man on purpose through love. Women are particularly given to that, thinking to themselves 'I will love him so, I will make so much of him afterwards, that it's no sin to torment him a little now.' And all in the house rejoice in the sight of you, and you are happy and gay and peaceful and honourable... Then there are some women who are jealous. If he went off anywhere-I knew one such woman, she couldn't restrain herself, but would jump up at night and run off on the sly to find out where he was, whether he was with some other woman. That's a pity. And the woman knows herself it's wrong, and her heart fails her and she suffers, but she loves-it's all through love. And how sweet it is to make up after quarrels, to own herself in the wrong or to forgive him! And they both are so happy all at once-as though they had met anew, been married over again; as though their love had begun afresh. And no one, no one should know what passes between husband and wife if they love one another. And whatever quarrels there may be between them they ought not to call in their own mother to judge between them and tell tales of one another. They are their own judges. Love is a holy mystery and ought to be hidden from all other eyes, whatever happens. That makes it holier and better. They respect one another more, and much is built on respect. And if once there has been love, if they have been married for love, why should love pass away? Surely one can keep it! It is rare that one cannot keep it. And if the husband is kind and straightforward, why should not love last? The first phase of married love will pass, it is true, but then there will come a love that is better still. Then there will be the union of souls, they will have everything in common, there will be no secrets between them. And once they have children, the most difficult times will seem to them happy, so long as there is love and courage. Even toil will be a joy, you may deny yourself bread for your children and even that will be a joy, They will love you for it afterwards; so you are laying by for your future. As the children grow up you feel that you are an example, a support for them; that even after you die your children will always keep your thoughts and feelings, because they have

received them from you, they will take on your semblance and likeness. So you see this is a great duty. How can it fail to draw the father and mother nearer? People say it's a trial to have children. Who says that? It is heavenly happiness! Are you fond of little children, Liza? I am awfully fond of them. You know-a little rosy baby boy at your bosom, and what husband's heart is not touched, seeing his wife nursing his child! A plump little rosy baby, sprawling and snuggling, chubby little hands and feet, clean tiny little nails, so tiny that it makes one laugh to look at them; eyes that look as if they understand everything. And while it sucks it clutches at your bosom with its little hand, plays. When its father comes up, the child tears itself away from the bosom, flings itself back, looks at its father, laughs, as though it were fearfully funny, and falls to sucking again. Or it will bite its mother's breast when its little teeth are coming, while it looks sideways at her with its little eyes as though to say, 'Look, I am biting!' Is not all that happiness when they are the three together, husband, wife and child? One can forgive a great deal for the sake of such moments. Yes, Liza, one must first learn to live oneself before one blames others!"

"It's by pictures, pictures like that one must get at you," I thought to myself, though I did speak with real feeling, and all at once I flushed crimson. "What if she were suddenly to burst out laughing, what should I do then?" That idea drove me to fury. Towards the end of my speech I really was excited, and now my vanity was somehow wounded. The silence continued. I almost nudged her.

"Why are you-" she began and stopped. But I understood: there was a quiver of something different in her voice, not abrupt, harsh and unyielding as before, but something soft and shamefaced, so shamefaced that I suddenly felt ashamed and guilty.

"What?" I asked, with tender curiosity.

"Why, you..."

"What?"

"Why, you... speak somehow like a book," she said, and again there was a note of irony in her voice.

That remark sent a pang to my heart. It was not what I was expecting.

I did not understand that she was hiding her feelings under irony, that this is usually the last refuge of modest and chaste-souled people when the privacy of their soul is coarsely and intrusively invaded, and that their pride makes them refuse to surrender till the last moment and shrink from giving

expression to their feelings before you. I ought to have guessed the truth from the timidity with which she had repeatedly approached her sarcasm, only bringing herself to utter it at last with an effort. But I did not guess, and an evil feeling took possession of me.

"Wait a bit!" I thought.

VII

"Oh, hush, Liza! How can you talk about being like a book, when it makes even me, an outsider, feel sick? Though I don't look at it as an outsider, for, indeed, it touches me to the heart... Is it possible, is it possible that you do not feel sick at being here yourself? Evidently habit does wonders! God knows what habit can do with anyone. Can you seriously think that you will never grow old, that you will always be good-looking, and that they will keep you here for ever and ever? I say nothing of the loathsomeness of the life here... Though let me tell you this about it-about your present life, I mean; here though you are young now, attractive, nice, with soul and feeling, yet you know as soon as I came to myself just now I felt at once sick at being here with you! One can only come here when one is drunk. But if you were anywhere else, living as good people live, I should perhaps be more than attracted by you, should fall in love with you, should be glad of a look from you, let alone a word; I should hang about your door, should go down on my knees to you, should look upon you as my betrothed and think it an honour to be allowed to. I should not dare to have an impure thought about you. But here, you see, I know that I have only to whistle and you have to come with me whether you like it or not. I don't consult your wishes, but you mine. The lowest labourer hires himself as a workman, but he doesn't make a slave of himself altogether; besides, he knows that he will be free again presently. But when are you free? Only think what you are giving up here? What is it you are making a slave of? It is your soul, together with your body; you are selling your soul which you have no right to dispose of! You give your love to be outraged by every drunkard! Love! But that's everything, you know, it's a priceless diamond, it's a maiden's treasure, love-why, a man would be ready to give his soul, to face death to gain that love. But how much is your love worth now? You are sold, all of you, body and soul, and there is no need to strive for love when you can have everything without love. And you know there is no greater insult to a girl than that, do you understand? To be sure, I have heard that they comfort you, poor fools, they let you have lovers of your own here. But you know that's simply a farce, that's simply a sham, it's just laughing at you, and you are taken in by it! Why, do you suppose he really loves you, that lover of yours? I don't believe it. How can he love you when he knows you may be called away from him

any minute? He would be a low fellow if he did! Will he have a grain of respect for you? What have you in common with him? He laughs at you and robs you-that is all his love amounts to! You are lucky if he does not beat you. Very likely he does beat you, too. Ask him, if you have got one, whether he will marry you. He will laugh in your face, if he doesn't spit in it or give you a blow-though maybe he is not worth a bad halfpenny himself. And for what have you ruined your life, if you come to think of it? For the coffee they give you to drink and the plentiful meals? But with what object are they feeding you up? An honest girl couldn't swallow the food, for she would know what she was being fed for. You are in debt here, and, of course, you will always be in debt, and you will go on in debt to the end, till the visitors here begin to scorn you. And that will soon happen, don't rely upon your youth-all that flies by express train here, you know. You will be kicked out. And not simply kicked out; long before that she'll begin nagging at you, scolding you, abusing you, as though you had not sacrificed your health for her, had not thrown away your youth and your soul for her benefit, but as though you had ruined her, beggared her, robbed her. And don't expect anyone to take your part: the others, your companions, will attack you, too, win her favour, for all are in slavery here, and have lost all conscience and pity here long ago. They have become utterly vile, and nothing on earth is viler, more loathsome, and more insulting than their abuse. And you are laying down everything here, unconditionally, youth and health and beauty and hope, and at twenty-two you will look like a woman of five-and-thirty, and you will be lucky if you are not diseased, pray to God for that! No doubt you are thinking now that you have a gay time and no work to do! Yet there is no work harder or more dreadful in the world or ever has been. One would think that the heart alone would be worn out with tears. And you won't dare to say a word, not half a word when they drive you away from here; you will go away as though you were to blame. You will change to another house, then to a third, then somewhere else, till you come down at last to the Haymarket. There you will be beaten at every turn; that is good manners there, the visitors don't know how to be friendly without beating you. You don't believe that it is so hateful there? Go and look for yourself some time, you can see with your own eyes. Once, one New Year's Day, I saw a woman at a door. They had turned her out as a joke, to give her a taste of the frost because she had been crying so much, and they shut the door behind her. At nine o'clock in the morning she was already quite drunk, dishevelled, half-

naked, covered with bruises, her face was powdered, but she had a black-eye, blood was trickling from her nose and her teeth; some cabman had just given her a drubbing. She was sitting on the stone steps, a salt fish of some sort was in her hand; she was crying, wailing something about her luck and beating with the fish on the steps, and cabmen and drunken soldiers were crowding in the doorway taunting her. You don't believe that you will ever be like that? I should be sorry to believe it, too, but how do you know; maybe ten years, eight years ago that very woman with the salt fish came here fresh as a cherub, innocent, pure, knowing no evil, blushing at every word. Perhaps she was like you, proud, ready to take offence, not like the others; perhaps she looked like a queen, and knew what happiness was in store for the man who should love her and whom she should love. Do you see how it ended? And what if at that very minute when she was beating on the filthy steps with that fish, drunken and dishevelled-what if at that very minute she recalled the pure early days in her father's house, when she used to go to school and the neighbour's son watched for her on the way, declaring that he would love her as long as he lived, that he would devote his life to her, and when they vowed to love one another for ever and be married as soon as they were grown up! No, Liza, it would be happy for you if you were to die soon of consumption in some corner, in some cellar like that woman just now. In the hospital, do you say? You will be lucky if they take you, but what if you are still of use to the madam here? Consumption is a queer disease, it is not like fever. The patient goes on hoping till the last minute and says he is all right. He deludes himself And that just suits your madam. Don't doubt it, that's how it is; you have sold your soul, and what is more you owe money, so you daren't say a word. But when you are dying, all will abandon you, all will turn away from you, for then there will be nothing to get from you. What's more, they will reproach you for cumbering the place, for being so long over dying. However you beg you won't get a drink of water without abuse: 'Whenever are you going off, you nasty hussy, you won't let us sleep with your moaning, you make the gentlemen sick.' That's true, I have heard such things said myself. They will thrust you dying into the filthiest corner in the cellar-in the damp and darkness; what will your thoughts be, lying there alone? When you die, strange hands will lay you out, with grumbling and impatience; no one will bless you, no one will sigh for you, they only want to get rid of you as soon as may be; they will buy a coffin, take you to the grave as they did that poor woman today, and celebrate your memory at the tavern. In the grave, sleet,

filth, wet snow-no need to put themselves out for you-'Let her down, Vanuha; it's just like her luck-even here, she is head-foremost, the hussy. Shorten the cord, you rascal.' 'It's all right as it is.' 'All right, is it? Why, she's on her side! She was a fellow-creature, after all! But, never mind, throw the earth on her.' And they won't care to waste much time quarrelling over you. They will scatter the wet blue clay as quick as they can and go off to the tavern... and there your memory on earth will end; other women have children to go to their graves, fathers, husbands. While for you neither tear, nor sigh, nor remembrance; no one in the whole world will ever come to you, your name will vanish from the face of the earth-as though you had never existed, never been born at all! Nothing but filth and mud, however you knock at your coffin lid at night, when the dead arise, however you cry: 'Let me out, kind people, to live in the light of day! My life was no life at all; my life has been thrown away like a dish-clout; it was drunk away in the tavern at the Haymarket; let me out, kind people, to live in the world again.'"

And I worked myself up to such a pitch that I began to have a lump in my throat myself, and... and all at once I stopped, sat up in dismay and, bending over apprehensively, began to listen with a beating heart. I had reason to be troubled.

I had felt for some time that I was turning her soul upside down and rending her heart, and-and the more I was convinced of it, the more eagerly I desired to gain my object as quickly and as effectually as possible. It was the exercise of my skill that carried me away; yet it was not merely sport...

I knew I was speaking stiffly, artificially, even bookishly, in fact, I could not speak except "like a book." But that did not trouble me: I knew, I felt that I should be understood and that this very bookishness might be an assistance. But now, having attained my effect, I was suddenly panic-stricken. Never before had I witnessed such despair! She was lying on her face, thrusting her face into the pillow and clutching it in both hands. Her heart was being torn. Her youthful body was shuddering all over as though in convulsions. Suppressed sobs rent her bosom and suddenly burst out in weeping and wailing, then she pressed closer into the pillow: she did not want anyone here, not a living soul, to know of her anguish and her tears. She bit the pillow, bit her hand till it bled (I saw that afterwards), or, thrusting her fingers into her dishevelled hair, seemed rigid with the effort of restraint, holding her breath and clenching her teeth. I began saying something, begging her to calm herself, but felt that I did not dare; and all at once, in a sort of cold

shiver, almost in terror, began fumbling in the dark, trying hurriedly to get dressed to go. It was dark; though I tried my best I could not finish dressing quickly. Suddenly I felt a box of matches and a candlestick with a whole candle in it. As soon as the room was lighted up, Liza sprang up, sat up in bed, and with a contorted face, with a half insane smile, looked at me almost senselessly. I sat down beside her and took her hands; she came to herself, made an impulsive movement towards me, would have caught hold of me, but did not dare, and slowly bowed her head before me.

"Liza, my dear, I was wrong... forgive me, my dear," I began, but she squeezed my hand in her fingers so tightly that I felt I was saying the wrong thing and stopped.

"This is my address, Liza, come to me."

"I will come," she answered resolutely, her head still bowed.

"But now I am going, good-bye... till we meet again."

I got up; she, too, stood up and suddenly flushed all over, gave a shudder, snatched up a shawl that was lying on a chair and muffled herself in it to her chin. As she did this she gave another sickly smile, blushed and looked at me strangely. I felt wretched; I was in haste to get away-to disappear.

"Wait a minute," she said suddenly, in the passage just at the doorway, stopping me with her hand on my overcoat. She put down the candle in hot haste and ran off; evidently she had thought of something or wanted to show me something. As she ran away she flushed, her eyes shone, and there was a smile on her lips-what was the meaning of it? Against my will I waited: she came back a minute later with an expression that seemed to ask forgiveness for something. In fact, it was not the same face, not the same look as the evening before: sullen, mistrustful and obstinate. Her eyes now were imploring, soft, and at the same time trustful, caressing, timid. The expression with which children look at people they are very fond of, of whom they are asking a favour. Her eyes were a light hazel, they were lovely eyes, full of life, and capable of expressing love as well as sullen hatred.

Making no explanation, as though I, as a sort of higher being, must understand everything without explanations, she held out a piece of paper to me. Her whole face was positively beaming at that instant with naive, almost childish, triumph. I unfolded it. It was a letter to her from a medical student or someone of that sort-a very high-flown and flowery, but extremely respectful, love-letter. I don't recall the words now, but I remember well that through the high-flown phrases there was apparent a genuine feeling, which

cannot be feigned. When I had finished reading it I met her glowing, questioning, and childishly impatient eyes fixed upon me. She fastened her eyes upon my face and waited impatiently for what I should say. In a few words, hurriedly, but with a sort of joy and pride, she explained to me that she had been to a dance somewhere in a private house, a family of "very nice people, WHO KNEW NOTHING, absolutely nothing, for she had only come here so lately and it had all happened... and she hadn't made up her mind to stay and was certainly going away as soon as she had paid her debt..." and at that party there had been the student who had danced with her all the evening. He had talked to her, and it turned out that he had known her in old days at Riga when he was a child, they had played together, but a very long time ago—and he knew her parents, but ABOUT THIS he knew nothing, nothing whatever, and had no suspicion! And the day after the dance (three days ago) he had sent her that letter through the friend with whom she had gone to the party... and... well, that was all.

She dropped her shining eyes with a sort of bashfulness as she finished.

The poor girl was keeping that student's letter as a precious treasure, and had run to fetch it, her only treasure, because she did not want me to go away without knowing that she, too, was honestly and genuinely loved; that she, too, was addressed respectfully. No doubt that letter was destined to lie in her box and lead to nothing. But none the less, I am certain that she would keep it all her life as a precious treasure, as her pride and justification, and now at such a minute she had thought of that letter and brought it with naive pride to raise herself in my eyes that I might see, that I, too, might think well of her. I said nothing, pressed her hand and went out. I so longed to get away... I walked all the way home, in spite of the fact that the melting snow was still falling in heavy flakes. I was exhausted, shattered, in bewilderment. But behind the bewilderment the truth was already gleaming. The loathsome truth.

VIII

It was some time, however, before I consented to recognise that truth. Waking up in the morning after some hours of heavy, leaden sleep, and immediately realising all that had happened on the previous day, I was positively amazed at my last night's SENTIMENTALITY with Liza, at all those "outcries of horror and pity." "To think of having such an attack of womanish hysteria, pah!" I concluded. And what did I thrust my address upon her for? What if she comes? Let her come, though; it doesn't matter... But OBVIOUSLY, that was not now the chief and the most important matter: I had to make haste and at all costs save my reputation in the eyes of Zverkov and Simonov as quickly as possible; that was the chief business. And I was so taken up that morning that I actually forgot all about Liza.

First of all I had at once to repay what I had borrowed the day before from Simonov. I resolved on a desperate measure: to borrow fifteen roubles straight off from Anton Antonitch. As luck would have it he was in the best of humours that morning, and gave it to me at once, on the first asking. I was so delighted at this that, as I signed the IOU with a swaggering air, I told him casually that the night before "I had been keeping it up with some friends at the Hotel de Paris; we were giving a farewell party to a comrade, in fact, I might say a friend of my childhood, and you know-a desperate rake, fearfully spoilt-of course, he belongs to a good family, and has considerable means, a brilliant career; he is witty, charming, a regular Lovelace, you understand; we drank an extra 'half-dozen' and..."

And it went off all right; all this was uttered very easily, unconstrainedly and complacently.

On reaching home I promptly wrote to Simonov.

To this hour I am lost in admiration when I recall the truly gentlemanly, good-humoured, candid tone of my letter. With tact and good-breeding, and, above all, entirely without superfluous words, I blamed myself for all that had happened. I defended myself, "if I really may be allowed to defend myself," by alleging that being utterly unaccustomed to wine, I had been intoxicated with the first glass, which I said, I had drunk before they arrived, while I was waiting for them at the Hotel de Paris between five and six o'clock. I begged Simonov's pardon especially; I asked him to convey my explanations to all the others, especially to Zverkov, whom "I seemed to

remember as though in a dream" I had insulted. I added that I would have called upon all of them myself, but my head ached, and besides I had not the face to. I was particularly pleased with a certain lightness, almost carelessness (strictly within the bounds of politeness, however), which was apparent in my style, and better than any possible arguments, gave them at once to understand that I took rather an independent view of "all that unpleasantness last night"; that I was by no means so utterly crushed as you, my friends, probably imagine; but on the contrary, looked upon it as a gentleman serenely respecting himself should look upon it. "On a young hero's past no censure is cast!"

"There is actually an aristocratic playfulness about it!" I thought admiringly, as I read over the letter. "And it's all because I am an intellectual and cultivated man! Another man in my place would not have known how to extricate himself, but here I have got out of it and am as jolly as ever again, and all because I am 'a cultivated and educated man of our day.' And, indeed, perhaps, everything was due to the wine yesterday. H'm!"... No, it was not the wine. I did not drink anything at all between five and six when I was waiting for them. I had lied to Simonov; I had lied shamelessly; and indeed I wasn't ashamed now... Hang it all though, the great thing was that I was rid of it.

I put six roubles in the letter, sealed it up, and asked Apollon to take it to Simonov. When he learned that there was money in the letter, Apollon became more respectful and agreed to take it. Towards evening I went out for a walk. My head was still aching and giddy after yesterday. But as evening came on and the twilight grew denser, my impressions and, following them, my thoughts, grew more and more different and confused. Something was not dead within me, in the depths of my heart and conscience it would not die, and it showed itself in acute depression. For the most part I jostled my way through the most crowded business streets, along Myeshtchansky Street, along Sadovy Street and in Yusupov Garden. I always liked particularly sauntering along these streets in the dusk, just when there were crowds of working people of all sorts going home from their daily work, with faces looking cross with anxiety. What I liked was just that cheap bustle, that bare prose. On this occasion the jostling of the streets irritated me more than ever, I could not make out what was wrong with me, I could not find the clue, something seemed rising up continually in my soul, painfully, and refusing to be appeased. I returned home completely upset, it was just as though some

crime were lying on my conscience.

The thought that Liza was coming worried me continually. It seemed queer to me that of all my recollections of yesterday this tormented me, as it were, especially, as it were, quite separately. Everything else I had quite succeeded in forgetting by the evening; I dismissed it all and was still perfectly satisfied with my letter to Simonov. But on this point I was not satisfied at all. It was as though I were worried only by Liza. "What if she comes," I thought incessantly, "well, it doesn't matter, let her come! H'm! it's horrid that she should see, for instance, how I live. Yesterday I seemed such a hero to her, while now, h'm! It's horrid, though, that I have let myself go so, the room looks like a beggar's. And I brought myself to go out to dinner in such a suit! And my American leather sofa with the stuffing sticking out. And my dressing-gown, which will not cover me, such tatters, and she will see all this and she will see Apollon. That beast is certain to insult her. He will fasten upon her in order to be rude to me. And I, of course, shall be panic-stricken as usual, I shall begin bowing and scraping before her and pulling my dressing-gown round me, I shall begin smiling, telling lies. Oh, the beastliness! And it isn't the beastliness of it that matters most! There is something more important, more loathsome, viler! Yes, viler! And to put on that dishonest lying mask again!..."

When I reached that thought I fired up all at once.

"Why dishonest? How dishonest? I was speaking sincerely last night. I remember there was real feeling in me, too. What I wanted was to excite an honourable feeling in her... Her crying was a good thing, it will have a good effect."

Yet I could not feel at ease. All that evening, even when I had come back home, even after nine o'clock, when I calculated that Liza could not possibly come, still she haunted me, and what was worse, she came back to my mind always in the same position. One moment out of all that had happened last night stood vividly before my imagination; the moment when I struck a match and saw her pale, distorted face, with its look of torture. And what a pitiful, what an unnatural, what a distorted smile she had at that moment! But I did not know then, that fifteen years later I should still in my imagination see Liza, always with the pitiful, distorted, inappropriate smile which was on her face at that minute.

Next day I was ready again to look upon it all as nonsense, due to over-excited nerves, and, above all, as EXAGGERATED. I was always conscious

of that weak point of mine, and sometimes very much afraid of it. "I exaggerate everything, that is where I go wrong," I repeated to myself every hour. But, however, "Liza will very likely come all the same," was the refrain with which all my reflections ended. I was so uneasy that I sometimes flew into a fury: "She'll come, she is certain to come!" I cried, running about the room, "if not today, she will come tomorrow; she'll find me out! The damnable romanticism of these pure hearts! Oh, the vileness-oh, the silliness-oh, the stupidity of these 'wretched sentimental souls!' Why, how fail to understand? How could one fail to understand?..."

But at this point I stopped short, and in great confusion, indeed.

And how few, how few words, I thought, in passing, were needed; how little of the idyllic (and affectedly, bookishly, artificially idyllic too) had sufficed to turn a whole human life at once according to my will. That's virginity, to be sure! Freshness of soil!

At times a thought occurred to me, to go to her, "to tell her all," and beg her not to come to me. But this thought stirred such wrath in me that I believed I should have crushed that "damned" Liza if she had chanced to be near me at the time. I should have insulted her, have spat at her, have turned her out, have struck her!

One day passed, however, another and another; she did not come and I began to grow calmer. I felt particularly bold and cheerful after nine o'clock, I even sometimes began dreaming, and rather sweetly: I, for instance, became the salvation of Liza, simply through her coming to me and my talking to her... I develop her, educate her. Finally, I notice that she loves me, loves me passionately. I pretend not to understand (I don't know, however, why I pretend, just for effect, perhaps). At last all confusion, transfigured, trembling and sobbing, she flings herself at my feet and says that I am her saviour, and that she loves me better than anything in the world. I am amazed, but... "Liza," I say, "can you imagine that I have not noticed your love? I saw it all, I divined it, but I did not dare to approach you first, because I had an influence over you and was afraid that you would force yourself, from gratitude, to respond to my love, would try to rouse in your heart a feeling which was perhaps absent, and I did not wish that... because it would be tyranny... it would be indelicate (in short, I launch off at that point into European, inexplicably lofty subtleties à la George Sand), but now, now you are mine, you are my creation, you are pure, you are good, you are my noble wife.

'Into my house come bold and free,
Its rightful mistress there to be'."

Then we begin living together, go abroad and so on, and so on. In fact, in the end it seemed vulgar to me myself, and I began putting out my tongue at myself.

Besides, they won't let her out, "the hussy!" I thought. They don't let them go out very readily, especially in the evening (for some reason I fancied she would come in the evening, and at seven o'clock precisely). Though she did say she was not altogether a slave there yet, and had certain rights; so, h'm! Damn it all, she will come, she is sure to come!

It was a good thing, in fact, that Apollon distracted my attention at that time by his rudeness. He drove me beyond all patience! He was the bane of my life, the curse laid upon me by Providence. We had been squabbling continually for years, and I hated him. My God, how I hated him! I believe I had never hated anyone in my life as I hated him, especially at some moments. He was an elderly, dignified man, who worked part of his time as a tailor. But for some unknown reason he despised me beyond all measure, and looked down upon me insufferably. Though, indeed, he looked down upon everyone. Simply to glance at that flaxen, smoothly brushed head, at the tuft of hair he combed up on his forehead and oiled with sunflower oil, at that dignified mouth, compressed into the shape of the letter V, made one feel one was confronting a man who never doubted of himself. He was a pedant, to the most extreme point, the greatest pedant I had met on earth, and with that had a vanity only befitting Alexander of Macedon. He was in love with every button on his coat, every nail on his fingers-absolutely in love with them, and he looked it! In his behaviour to me he was a perfect tyrant, he spoke very little to me, and if he chanced to glance at me he gave me a firm, majestically self-confident and invariably ironical look that drove me sometimes to fury. He did his work with the air of doing me the greatest favour, though he did scarcely anything for me, and did not, indeed, consider himself bound to do anything. There could be no doubt that he looked upon me as the greatest fool on earth, and that "he did not get rid of me" was simply that he could get wages from me every month. He consented to do nothing for me for seven roubles a month. Many sins should be forgiven me for what I suffered from him. My hatred reached such a point that sometimes his very step almost threw me into convulsions. What I loathed particularly was his lisp. His tongue must have been a little too long or something of that sort, for he

continually lisped, and seemed to be very proud of it, imagining that it greatly added to his dignity. He spoke in a slow, measured tone, with his hands behind his back and his eyes fixed on the ground. He maddened me particularly when he read aloud the psalms to himself behind his partition. Many a battle I waged over that reading! But he was awfully fond of reading aloud in the evenings, in a slow, even, sing-song voice, as though over the dead. It is interesting that that is how he has ended: he hires himself out to read the psalms over the dead, and at the same time he kills rats and makes blacking. But at that time I could not get rid of him, it was as though he were chemically combined with my existence. Besides, nothing would have induced him to consent to leave me. I could not live in furnished lodgings: my lodging was my private solitude, my shell, my cave, in which I concealed myself from all mankind, and Apollon seemed to me, for some reason, an integral part of that flat, and for seven years I could not turn him away.

To be two or three days behind with his wages, for instance, was impossible. He would have made such a fuss, I should not have known where to hide my head. But I was so exasperated with everyone during those days, that I made up my mind for some reason and with some object to PUNISH Apollon and not to pay him for a fortnight the wages that were owing him. I had for a long time-for the last two years-been intending to do this, simply in order to teach him not to give himself airs with me, and to show him that if I liked I could withhold his wages. I purposed to say nothing to him about it, and was purposely silent indeed, in order to score off his pride and force him to be the first to speak of his wages. Then I would take the seven roubles out of a drawer, show him I have the money put aside on purpose, but that I won't, I won't, I simply won't pay him his wages, I won't just because that is "what I wish," because "I am master, and it is for me to decide," because he has been disrespectful, because he has been rude; but if he were to ask respectfully I might be softened and give it to him, otherwise he might wait another fortnight, another three weeks, a whole month...

But angry as I was, yet he got the better of me. I could not hold out for four days. He began as he always did begin in such cases, for there had been such cases already, there had been attempts (and it may be observed I knew all this beforehand, I knew his nasty tactics by heart). He would begin by fixing upon me an exceedingly severe stare, keeping it up for several minutes at a time, particularly on meeting me or seeing me out of the house. If I held out and pretended not to notice these stares, he would, still in silence, proceed

to further tortures. All at once, A PROPOS of nothing, he would walk softly and smoothly into my room, when I was pacing up and down or reading, stand at the door, one hand behind his back and one foot behind the other, and fix upon me a stare more than severe, utterly contemptuous. If I suddenly asked him what he wanted, he would make me no answer, but continue staring at me persistently for some seconds, then, with a peculiar compression of his lips and a most significant air, deliberately turn round and deliberately go back to his room. Two hours later he would come out again and again present himself before me in the same way. It had happened that in my fury I did not even ask him what he wanted, but simply raised my head sharply and imperiously and began staring back at him. So we stared at one another for two minutes; at last he turned with deliberation and dignity and went back again for two hours.

If I were still not brought to reason by all this, but persisted in my revolt, he would suddenly begin sighing while he looked at me, long, deep sighs as though measuring by them the depths of my moral degradation, and, of course, it ended at last by his triumphing completely: I raged and shouted, but still was forced to do what he wanted.

This time the usual staring manoeuvres had scarcely begun when I lost my temper and flew at him in a fury. I was irritated beyond endurance apart from him.

"Stay," I cried, in a frenzy, as he was slowly and silently turning, with one hand behind his back, to go to his room. "Stay! Come back, come back, I tell you!" and I must have bawled so unnaturally, that he turned round and even looked at me with some wonder. However, he persisted in saying nothing, and that infuriated me.

"How dare you come and look at me like that without being sent for? Answer!"

After looking at me calmly for half a minute, he began turning round again.

"Stay!" I roared, running up to him, "don't stir! There. Answer, now: what did you come in to look at?"

"If you have any order to give me it's my duty to carry it out," he answered, after another silent pause, with a slow, measured lisp, raising his eyebrows and calmly twisting his head from one side to another, all this with exasperating composure.

"That's not what I am asking you about, you torturer!" I shouted, turning

crimson with anger. "I'll tell you why you came here myself: you see, I don't give you your wages, you are so proud you don't want to bow down and ask for it, and so you come to punish me with your stupid stares, to worry me and you have no sus-pic-ion how stupid it is-stupid, stupid, stupid, stupid!..."

He would have turned round again without a word, but I seized him.

"Listen," I shouted to him. "Here's the money, do you see, here it is," (I took it out of the table drawer); "here's the seven roubles complete, but you are not going to have it, you... are... not... going... to... have it until you come respectfully with bowed head to beg my pardon. Do you hear?"

"That cannot be," he answered, with the most unnatural self-confidence.

"It shall be so," I said, "I give you my word of honour, it shall be!"

"And there's nothing for me to beg your pardon for," he went on, as though he had not noticed my exclamations at all. "Why, besides, you called me a 'torturer,' for which I can summon you at the police-station at any time for insulting behaviour."

"Go, summon me," I roared, "go at once, this very minute, this very second! You are a torturer all the same! a torturer!"

But he merely looked at me, then turned, and regardless of my loud calls to him, he walked to his room with an even step and without looking round.

"If it had not been for Liza nothing of this would have happened," I decided inwardly. Then, after waiting a minute, I went myself behind his screen with a dignified and solemn air, though my heart was beating slowly and violently.

"Apollon," I said quietly and emphatically, though I was breathless, "go at once without a minute's delay and fetch the police-officer."

He had meanwhile settled himself at his table, put on his spectacles and taken up some sewing. But, hearing my order, he burst into a guffaw.

"At once, go this minute! Go on, or else you can't imagine what will happen."

"You are certainly out of your mind," he observed, without even raising his head, lisping as deliberately as ever and threading his needle. "Whoever heard of a man sending for the police against himself? And as for being frightened-you are upsetting yourself about nothing, for nothing will come of it."

"Go!" I shrieked, clutching him by the shoulder. I felt I should strike him in a minute.

But I did not notice the door from the passage softly and slowly open at

that instant and a figure come in, stop short, and begin staring at us in perplexity I glanced, nearly swooned with shame, and rushed back to my room. There, clutching at my hair with both hands, I leaned my head against the wall and stood motionless in that position.

Two minutes later I heard Apollon's deliberate footsteps. "There is some woman asking for you," he said, looking at me with peculiar severity. Then he stood aside and let in Liza. He would not go away, but stared at us sarcastically.

"Go away, go away," I commanded in desperation. At that moment my clock began whirring and wheezing and struck seven.

IX

"Into my house come bold and free,
Its rightful mistress there to be."

I stood before her crushed, crestfallen, revoltingly confused, and I believe I smiled as I did my utmost to wrap myself in the skirts of my ragged wadded dressing-gown-exactly as I had imagined the scene not long before in a fit of depression. After standing over us for a couple of minutes Apollon went away, but that did not make me more at ease. What made it worse was that she, too, was overwhelmed with confusion, more so, in fact, than I should have expected. At the sight of me, of course.

"Sit down," I said mechanically, moving a chair up to the table, and I sat down on the sofa. She obediently sat down at once and gazed at me open-eyed, evidently expecting something from me at once. This naivete of expectation drove me to fury, but I restrained myself.

She ought to have tried not to notice, as though everything had been as usual, while instead of that, she... and I dimly felt that I should make her pay dearly for ALL THIS.

"You have found me in a strange position, Liza," I began, stammering and knowing that this was the wrong way to begin. "No, no, don't imagine anything," I cried, seeing that she had suddenly flushed. "I am not ashamed of my poverty... On the contrary, I look with pride on my poverty. I am poor but honourable... One can be poor and honourable," I muttered. "However... would you like tea?..."

"No," she was beginning.

"Wait a minute."

I leapt up and ran to Apollon. I had to get out of the room somehow.

"Apollon," I whispered in feverish haste, flinging down before him the seven roubles which had remained all the time in my clenched fist, "here are your wages, you see I give them to you; but for that you must come to my rescue: bring me tea and a dozen rusks from the restaurant. If you won't go, you'll make me a miserable man! You don't know what this woman is... This is-everything! You may be imagining something... But you don't know what that woman is!..."

Apollon, who had already sat down to his work and put on his spectacles again, at first glanced askance at the money without speaking or putting down

his needle; then, without paying the slightest attention to me or making any answer, he went on busying himself with his needle, which he had not yet threaded. I waited before him for three minutes with my arms crossed A LA NAPOLEON. My temples were moist with sweat. I was pale, I felt it. But, thank God, he must have been moved to pity, looking at me. Having threaded his needle he deliberately got up from his seat, deliberately moved back his chair, deliberately took off his spectacles, deliberately counted the money, and finally asking me over his shoulder: "Shall I get a whole portion?" deliberately walked out of the room. As I was going back to Liza, the thought occurred to me on the way: shouldn't I run away just as I was in my dressing-gown, no matter where, and then let happen what would?

I sat down again. She looked at me uneasily. For some minutes we were silent.

"I will kill him," I shouted suddenly, striking the table with my fist so that the ink spurted out of the inkstand.

"What are you saying!" she cried, starting.

"I will kill him! kill him!" I shrieked, suddenly striking the table in absolute frenzy, and at the same time fully understanding how stupid it was to be in such a frenzy. "You don't know, Liza, what that torturer is to me. He is my torturer... He has gone now to fetch some rusks; he..."

And suddenly I burst into tears. It was an hysterical attack. How ashamed I felt in the midst of my sobs; but still I could not restrain them.

She was frightened.

"What is the matter? What is wrong?" she cried, fussing about me.

"Water, give me water, over there!" I muttered in a faint voice, though I was inwardly conscious that I could have got on very well without water and without muttering in a faint voice. But I was, what is called, PUTTING IT ON, to save appearances, though the attack was a genuine one.

She gave me water, looking at me in bewilderment. At that moment Apollon brought in the tea. It suddenly seemed to me that this commonplace, prosaic tea was horribly undignified and paltry after all that had happened, and I blushed crimson. Liza looked at Apollon with positive alarm. He went out without a glance at either of us.

"Liza, do you despise me?" I asked, looking at her fixedly, trembling with impatience to know what she was thinking.

She was confused, and did not know what to answer.

"Drink your tea," I said to her angrily. I was angry with myself, but, of

course, it was she who would have to pay for it. A horrible spite against her suddenly surged up in my heart; I believe I could have killed her. To revenge myself on her I swore inwardly not to say a word to her all the time. "She is the cause of it all," I thought.

Our silence lasted for five minutes. The tea stood on the table; we did not touch it. I had got to the point of purposely refraining from beginning in order to embarrass her further; it was awkward for her to begin alone. Several times she glanced at me with mournful perplexity. I was obstinately silent. I was, of course, myself the chief sufferer, because I was fully conscious of the disgusting meanness of my spiteful stupidity, and yet at the same time I could not restrain myself.

"I want to... get away... from there altogether," she began, to break the silence in some way, but, poor girl, that was just what she ought not to have spoken about at such a stupid moment to a man so stupid as I was. My heart positively ached with pity for her tactless and unnecessary straightforwardness. But something hideous at once stifled all compassion in me; it even provoked me to greater venom. I did not care what happened. Another five minutes passed.

"Perhaps I am in your way," she began timidly, hardly audibly, and was getting up.

But as soon as I saw this first impulse of wounded dignity I positively trembled with spite, and at once burst out.

"Why have you come to me, tell me that, please?" I began, gasping for breath and regardless of logical connection in my words. I longed to have it all out at once, at one burst; I did not even trouble how to begin. "Why have you come? Answer, answer," I cried, hardly knowing what I was doing. "I'll tell you, my good girl, why you have come. You've come because I talked sentimental stuff to you then. So now you are soft as butter and longing for fine sentiments again. So you may as well know that I was laughing at you then. And I am laughing at you now. Why are you shuddering? Yes, I was laughing at you! I had been insulted just before, at dinner, by the fellows who came that evening before me. I came to you, meaning to thrash one of them, an officer; but I didn't succeed, I didn't find him; I had to avenge the insult on someone to get back my own again; you turned up, I vented my spleen on you and laughed at you. I had been humiliated, so I wanted to humiliate; I had been treated like a rag, so I wanted to show my power... That's what it was, and you imagined I had come there on purpose to save you. Yes? You

imagined that? You imagined that?"

I knew that she would perhaps be muddled and not take it all in exactly, but I knew, too, that she would grasp the gist of it, very well indeed. And so, indeed, she did. She turned white as a handkerchief, tried to say something, and her lips worked painfully; but she sank on a chair as though she had been felled by an axe. And all the time afterwards she listened to me with her lips parted and her eyes wide open, shuddering with awful terror. The cynicism, the cynicism of my words overwhelmed her...

"Save you!" I went on, jumping up from my chair and running up and down the room before her. "Save you from what? But perhaps I am worse than you myself. Why didn't you throw it in my teeth when I was giving you that sermon: 'But what did you come here yourself for? was it to read us a sermon?' Power, power was what I wanted then, sport was what I wanted, I wanted to wring out your tears, your humiliation, your hysteria-that was what I wanted then! Of course, I couldn't keep it up then, because I am a wretched creature, I was frightened, and, the devil knows why, gave you my address in my folly. Afterwards, before I got home, I was cursing and swearing at you because of that address, I hated you already because of the lies I had told you. Because I only like playing with words, only dreaming, but, do you know, what I really want is that you should all go to hell. That is what I want. I want peace; yes, I'd sell the whole world for a farthing, straight off, so long as I was left in peace. Is the world to go to pot, or am I to go without my tea? I say that the world may go to pot for me so long as I always get my tea. Did you know that, or not? Well, anyway, I know that I am a blackguard, a scoundrel, an egoist, a sluggard. Here I have been shuddering for the last three days at the thought of your coming. And do you know what has worried me particularly for these three days? That I posed as such a hero to you, and now you would see me in a wretched torn dressing-gown, beggarly, loathsome. I told you just now that I was not ashamed of my poverty; so you may as well know that I am ashamed of it; I am more ashamed of it than of anything, more afraid of it than of being found out if I were a thief, because I am as vain as though I had been skinned and the very air blowing on me hurt. Surely by now you must realise that I shall never forgive you for having found me in this wretched dressing-gown, just as I was flying at Apollon like a spiteful cur. The saviour, the former hero, was flying like a mangy, unkempt sheep-dog at his lackey, and the lackey was jeering at him! And I shall never forgive you for the tears I could not help shedding before you just

now, like some silly woman put to shame! And for what I am confessing to you now, I shall never forgive you either! Yes-you must answer for it all because you turned up like this, because I am a blackguard, because I am the nastiest, stupidest, absurdest and most envious of all the worms on earth, who are not a bit better than I am, but, the devil knows why, are never put to confusion; while I shall always be insulted by every louse, that is my doom! And what is it to me that you don't understand a word of this! And what do I care, what do I care about you, and whether you go to ruin there or not? Do you understand? How I shall hate you now after saying this, for having been here and listening. Why, it's not once in a lifetime a man speaks out like this, and then it is in hysterics!... What more do you want? Why do you still stand confronting me, after all this? Why are you worrying me? Why don't you go?"

But at this point a strange thing happened. I was so accustomed to think and imagine everything from books, and to picture everything in the world to myself just as I had made it up in my dreams beforehand, that I could not all at once take in this strange circumstance. What happened was this: Liza, insulted and crushed by me, understood a great deal more than I imagined. She understood from all this what a woman understands first of all, if she feels genuine love, that is, that I was myself unhappy.

The frightened and wounded expression on her face was followed first by a look of sorrowful perplexity. When I began calling myself a scoundrel and a blackguard and my tears flowed (the tirade was accompanied throughout by tears) her whole face worked convulsively. She was on the point of getting up and stopping me; when I finished she took no notice of my shouting: "Why are you here, why don't you go away?" but realised only that it must have been very bitter to me to say all this. Besides, she was so crushed, poor girl; she considered herself infinitely beneath me; how could she feel anger or resentment? She suddenly leapt up from her chair with an irresistible impulse and held out her hands, yearning towards me, though still timid and not daring to stir... At this point there was a revulsion in my heart too. Then she suddenly rushed to me, threw her arms round me and burst into tears. I, too, could not restrain myself, and sobbed as I never had before.

"They won't let me... I can't be good!" I managed to articulate; then I went to the sofa, fell on it face downwards, and sobbed on it for a quarter of an hour in genuine hysterics. She came close to me, put her arms round me and stayed motionless in that position. But the trouble was that the hysterics

could not go on for ever, and (I am writing the loathsome truth) lying face downwards on the sofa with my face thrust into my nasty leather pillow, I began by degrees to be aware of a far-away, involuntary but irresistible feeling that it would be awkward now for me to raise my head and look Liza straight in the face. Why was I ashamed? I don't know, but I was ashamed. The thought, too, came into my overwrought brain that our parts now were completely changed, that she was now the heroine, while I was just a crushed and humiliated creature as she had been before me that night-four days before... And all this came into my mind during the minutes I was lying on my face on the sofa.

My God! surely I was not envious of her then.

I don't know, to this day I cannot decide, and at the time, of course, I was still less able to understand what I was feeling than now. I cannot get on without domineering and tyrannising over someone, but... there is no explaining anything by reasoning and so it is useless to reason.

I conquered myself, however, and raised my head; I had to do so sooner or later... and I am convinced to this day that it was just because I was ashamed to look at her that another feeling was suddenly kindled and flamed up in my heart... a feeling of mastery and possession. My eyes gleamed with passion, and I gripped her hands tightly. How I hated her and how I was drawn to her at that minute! The one feeling intensified the other. It was almost like an act of vengeance. At first there was a look of amazement, even of terror on her face, but only for one instant. She warmly and rapturously embraced me.

A quarter of an hour later I was rushing up and down the room in frenzied impatience, from minute to minute I went up to the screen and peeped through the crack at Liza. She was sitting on the ground with her head leaning against the bed, and must have been crying. But she did not go away, and that irritated me. This time she understood it all. I had insulted her finally, but... there's no need to describe it. She realised that my outburst of passion had been simply revenge, a fresh humiliation, and that to my earlier, almost causeless hatred was added now a PERSONAL HATRED, born of envy... Though I do not maintain positively that she understood all this distinctly; but she certainly did fully understand that I was a despicable man, and what was worse, incapable of loving her.

I know I shall be told that this is incredible-but it is incredible to be as spiteful and stupid as I was; it may be added that it was strange I should not love her, or at any rate, appreciate her love. Why is it strange? In the first place, by then I was incapable of love, for I repeat, with me loving meant tyrannising and showing my moral superiority. I have never in my life been able to imagine any other sort of love, and have nowadays come to the point of sometimes thinking that love really consists in the right-freely given by the beloved object-to tyrannise over her.

Even in my underground dreams I did not imagine love except as a struggle. I began it always with hatred and ended it with moral subjugation, and afterwards I never knew what to do with the subjugated object. And what is there to wonder at in that, since I had succeeded in so corrupting myself, since I was so out of touch with "real life," as to have actually thought of reproaching her, and putting her to shame for having come to me to hear "fine sentiments"; and did not even guess that she had come not to hear fine sentiments, but to love me, because to a woman all reformation, all salvation from any sort of ruin, and all moral renewal is included in love and can only show itself in that form.

I did not hate her so much, however, when I was running about the room and peeping through the crack in the screen. I was only insufferably oppressed by her being here. I wanted her to disappear. I wanted "peace," to be left alone in my underground world. Real life oppressed me with its novelty so much that I could hardly breathe.

But several minutes passed and she still remained, without stirring, as though she were unconscious. I had the shamelessness to tap softly at the screen as though to remind her... She started, sprang up, and flew to seek her kerchief, her hat, her coat, as though making her escape from me... Two minutes later she came from behind the screen and looked with heavy eyes at me. I gave a spiteful grin, which was forced, however, to KEEP UP APPEARANCES, and I turned away from her eyes.

"Good-bye," she said, going towards the door.

I ran up to her, seized her hand, opened it, thrust something in it and closed it again. Then I turned at once and dashed away in haste to the other corner of the room to avoid seeing, anyway...

I did mean a moment since to tell a lie-to write that I did this accidentally, not knowing what I was doing through foolishness, through losing my head. But I don't want to lie, and so I will say straight out that I opened her hand and put the money in it... from spite. It came into my head to do this while I was running up and down the room and she was sitting behind the screen. But this I can say for certain: though I did that cruel thing purposely, it was not an impulse from the heart, but came from my evil brain. This cruelty was so affected, so purposely made up, so completely a product of the brain, of books, that I could not even keep it up a minute-first I dashed away to avoid seeing her, and then in shame and despair rushed after Liza. I opened the door in the passage and began listening.

"Liza! Liza!" I cried on the stairs, but in a low voice, not boldly. There was no answer, but I fancied I heard her footsteps, lower down on the stairs.

"Liza!" I cried, more loudly.

No answer. But at that minute I heard the stiff outer glass door open heavily with a creak and slam violently; the sound echoed up the stairs.

She had gone. I went back to my room in hesitation. I felt horribly oppressed.

I stood still at the table, beside the chair on which she had sat and looked aimlessly before me. A minute passed, suddenly I started; straight before me on the table I saw... In short, I saw a crumpled blue five-rouble note, the one I had thrust into her hand a minute before. It was the same note; it could be no other, there was no other in the flat. So she had managed to fling it from her hand on the table at the moment when I had dashed into the further corner.

Well! I might have expected that she would do that. Might I have

expected it? No, I was such an egoist, I was so lacking in respect for my fellow-creatures that I could not even imagine she would do so. I could not endure it. A minute later I flew like a madman to dress, flinging on what I could at random and ran headlong after her. She could not have got two hundred paces away when I ran out into the street.

It was a still night and the snow was coming down in masses and falling almost perpendicularly, covering the pavement and the empty street as though with a pillow. There was no one in the street, no sound was to be heard. The street lamps gave a disconsolate and useless glimmer. I ran two hundred paces to the cross-roads and stopped short.

Where had she gone? And why was I running after her?

Why? To fall down before her, to sob with remorse, to kiss her feet, to entreat her forgiveness! I longed for that, my whole breast was being rent to pieces, and never, never shall I recall that minute with indifference. But-what for? I thought. Should I not begin to hate her, perhaps, even tomorrow, just because I had kissed her feet today? Should I give her happiness? Had I not recognised that day, for the hundredth time, what I was worth? Should I not torture her?

I stood in the snow, gazing into the troubled darkness and pondered this.

"And will it not be better?" I mused fantastically, afterwards at home, stifling the living pang of my heart with fantastic dreams. "Will it not be better that she should keep the resentment of the insult for ever? Resentment-why, it is purification; it is a most stinging and painful consciousness! Tomorrow I should have defiled her soul and have exhausted her heart, while now the feeling of insult will never die in her heart, and however loathsome the filth awaiting her-the feeling of insult will elevate and purify her... by hatred... h'm!... perhaps, too, by forgiveness... Will all that make things easier for her though?..."

And, indeed, I will ask on my own account here, an idle question: which is better-cheap happiness or exalted sufferings? Well, which is better?

So I dreamed as I sat at home that evening, almost dead with the pain in my soul. Never had I endured such suffering and remorse, yet could there have been the faintest doubt when I ran out from my lodging that I should turn back half-way? I never met Liza again and I have heard nothing of her. I will add, too, that I remained for a long time afterwards pleased with the phrase about the benefit from resentment and hatred in spite of the fact that I almost fell ill from misery.

Even now, so many years later, all this is somehow a very evil memory. I have many evil memories now, but... hadn't I better end my "Notes" here? I believe I made a mistake in beginning to write them, anyway I have felt ashamed all the time I've been writing this story; so it's hardly literature so much as a corrective punishment. Why, to tell long stories, showing how I have spoiled my life through morally rotting in my corner, through lack of fitting environment, through divorce from real life, and rankling spite in my underground world, would certainly not be interesting; a novel needs a hero, and all the traits for an anti-hero are EXPRESSLY gathered together here, and what matters most, it all produces an unpleasant impression, for we are all divorced from life, we are all cripples, every one of us, more or less. We are so divorced from it that we feel at once a sort of loathing for real life, and so cannot bear to be reminded of it. Why, we have come almost to looking upon real life as an effort, almost as hard work, and we are all privately agreed that it is better in books. And why do we fuss and fume sometimes? Why are we perverse and ask for something else? We don't know what ourselves. It would be the worse for us if our petulant prayers were answered. Come, try, give any one of us, for instance, a little more independence, untie our hands, widen the spheres of our activity, relax the control and we... yes, I assure you... we should be begging to be under control again at once. I know that you will very likely be angry with me for that, and will begin shouting and stamping. Speak for yourself, you will say, and for your miseries in your underground holes, and don't dare to say all of us-excuse me, gentlemen, I am not justifying myself with that "all of us." As for what concerns me in particular I have only in my life carried to an extreme what you have not dared to carry halfway, and what's more, you have taken your cowardice for good sense, and have found comfort in deceiving yourselves. So that perhaps, after all, there is more life in me than in you. Look into it more carefully! Why, we don't even know what living means now, what it is, and what it is called? Leave us alone without books and we shall be lost and in confusion at once. We shall not know what to join on to, what to cling to, what to love and what to hate, what to respect and what to despise. We are oppressed at being men-men with a real individual body and blood, we are ashamed of it, we think it a disgrace and try to contrive to be some sort of impossible generalised man. We are stillborn, and for generations past have been begotten, not by living fathers, and that suits us better and better. We are developing a taste for it. Soon we shall contrive to be born somehow from an

idea. But enough; I don't want to write more from "Underground."

[The notes of this paradoxalist do not end here, however. He could not refrain from going on with them, but it seems to us that we may stop here.]

THE CHRISTMAS TREE AND THE WEDDING

The other day I saw a wedding... But no! I would rather tell you about a Christmas tree. The wedding was superb. I liked it immensely. But the other incident was still finer. I don't know why it is that the sight of the wedding reminded me of the Christmas tree. This is the way it happened:

Exactly five years ago, on New Year's Eve, I was invited to a children's ball by a man high up in the business world, who had his connections, his circle of acquaintances, and his intrigues. So it seemed as though the children's ball was merely a pretext for the parents to come together and discuss matters of interest to themselves, quite innocently and casually.

I was an outsider, and, as I had no special matters to air, I was able to spend the evening independently of the others. There was another gentleman present who like myself had just stumbled upon this affair of domestic bliss. He was the first to attract my attention. His appearance was not that of a man of birth or high family. He was tall, rather thin, very serious, and well dressed. Apparently he had no heart for the family festivities. The instant he went off into a corner by himself the smile disappeared from his face, and his thick dark brows knitted into a frown. He knew no one except the host and showed every sign of being bored to death, though bravely sustaining the role of thorough enjoyment to the end. Later I learned that he was a provincial, had come to the capital on some important, brain-racking business, had brought a letter of recommendation to our host, and our host had taken him under his protection, not at all *con amore*. It was merely out of politeness that he had invited him to the children's ball.

They did not play cards with him, they did not offer him cigars. No one entered into conversation with him. Possibly they recognised the bird by its feathers from a distance. Thus, my gentleman, not knowing what to do with his hands, was compelled to spend the evening stroking his whiskers. His whiskers were really fine, but he stroked them so assiduously that one got the feeling that the whiskers had come into the world first and afterwards the man in order to stroke them.

There was another guest who interested me. But he was of quite a different order. He was a personage. They called him Julian Mastakovich. At first glance one could tell he was an honoured guest and stood in the same relation to the host as the host to the gentleman of the whiskers. The host and

hostess said no end of amiable things to him, were most attentive, wining him, hovering over him, bringing guests up to be introduced, but never leading him to any one else. I noticed tears glisten in our host's eyes when Julian Mastakovich remarked that he had rarely spent such a pleasant evening. Somehow I began to feel uncomfortable in this personage's presence. So, after amusing myself with the children, five of whom, remarkably well-fed young persons, were our host's, I went into a little sitting-room, entirely unoccupied, and seated myself at the end that was a conservatory and took up almost half the room.

The children were charming. They absolutely refused to resemble their elders, notwithstanding the efforts of mothers and governesses. In a jiffy they had denuded the Christmas tree down to the very last sweet and had already succeeded in breaking half of their playthings before they even found out which belonged to whom.

One of them was a particularly handsome little lad, dark-eyed, curly-haired, who stubbornly persisted in aiming at me with his wooden gun. But the child that attracted the greatest attention was his sister, a girl of about eleven, lovely as a Cupid. She was quiet and thoughtful, with large, full, dreamy eyes. The children had somehow offended her, and she left them and walked into the same room that I had withdrawn into. There she seated herself with her doll in a corner.

"Her father is an immensely wealthy business man," the guests informed each other in tones of awe. "Three hundred thousand rubles set aside for her dowry already."

As I turned to look at the group from which I heard this news item issuing, my glance met Julian Mastakovich's. He stood listening to the insipid chatter in an attitude of concentrated attention, with his hands behind his back and his head inclined to one side.

All the while I was quite lost in admiration of the shrewdness our host displayed in the dispensing of the gifts. The little maid of the many-rubied dowry received the handsomest doll, and the rest of the gifts were graded in value according to the diminishing scale of the parents' stations in life. The last child, a tiny chap of ten, thin, red-haired, freckled, came into possession of a small book of nature stories without illustrations or even head and tail pieces. He was the governess's child. She was a poor widow, and her little boy, clad in a sorry-looking little nankeen jacket, looked thoroughly crushed and intimidated. He took the book of nature stories and circled slowly about

the children's toys. He would have given anything to play with them. But he did not dare to. You could tell he already knew his place.

I like to observe children. It is fascinating to watch the individuality in them struggling for self-assertion. I could see that the other children's things had tremendous charm for the red-haired boy, especially a toy theatre, in which he was so anxious to take a part that he resolved to fawn upon the other children. He smiled and began to play with them. His one and only apple he handed over to a puffy urchin whose pockets were already crammed with sweets, and he even carried another youngster pickaback-all simply that he might be allowed to stay with the theatre.

But in a few moments an impudent young person fell on him and gave him a pummelling. He did not dare even to cry. The governess came and told him to leave off interfering with the other children's games, and he crept away to the same room the little girl and I were in. She let him sit down beside her, and the two set themselves busily dressing the expensive doll.

Almost half an hour passed, and I was nearly dozing off, as I sat there in the conservatory half listening to the chatter of the red-haired boy and the dowered beauty, when Julian Mastakovich entered suddenly. He had slipped out of the drawing-room under cover of a noisy scene among the children. From my secluded corner it had not escaped my notice that a few moments before he had been eagerly conversing with the rich girl's father, to whom he had only just been introduced.

He stood still for a while reflecting and mumbling to himself, as if counting something on his fingers.

"Three hundred-three hundred-eleven-twelve-thirteen-sixteen-in five years! Let's say four per cent-five times twelve-sixty, and on these sixty-. Let us assume that in five years it will amount to-well, four hundred. Hm-hm! But the shrewd old fox isn't likely to be satisfied with four per cent. He gets eight or even ten, perhaps. Let's suppose five hundred, five hundred thousand, at least, that's sure. Anything above that for pocket money-hm-"

He blew his nose and was about to leave the room when he spied the girl and stood still. I, behind the plants, escaped his notice. He seemed to me to be quivering with excitement. It must have been his calculations that upset him so. He rubbed his hands and danced from place to place, and kept getting more and more excited. Finally, however, he conquered his emotions and came to a standstill. He cast a determined look at the future bride and wanted to move toward her, but glanced about first. Then, as if with a guilty

conscience, he stepped over to the child on tip-toe, smiling, and bent down and kissed her head.

His coming was so unexpected that she uttered a shriek of alarm.

“What are you doing here, dear child?” he whispered, looking around and pinching her cheek.

“We’re playing.”

“What, with him?” said Julian Mastakovich with a look askance at the governess’s child. “You should go into the drawing-room, my lad,” he said to him.

The boy remained silent and looked up at the man with wide-open eyes. Julian Mastakovich glanced round again cautiously and bent down over the girl.

“What have you got, a doll, my dear?”

“Yes, sir.” The child quailed a little, and her brow wrinkled.

“A doll? And do you know, my dear, what dolls are made of?”

“No, sir,” she said weakly, and lowered her head.

“Out of rags, my dear. You, boy, you go back to the drawing-room, to the children,” said Julian Mastakovich looking at the boy sternly.

The two children frowned. They caught hold of each other and would not part.

“And do you know why they gave you the doll?” asked Julian Mastakovich, dropping his voice lower and lower.

“No.”

“Because you were a good, very good little girl the whole week.”

Saying which, Julian Mastakovich was seized with a paroxysm of agitation. He looked round and said in a tone faint, almost inaudible with excitement and impatience:

“If I come to visit your parents will you love me, my dear?”

He tried to kiss the sweet little creature, but the red-haired boy saw that she was on the verge of tears, and he caught her hand and sobbed out loud in sympathy. That enraged the man.

“Go away! Go away! Go back to the other room, to your playmates.”

“I don’t want him to. I don’t want him to! You go away!” cried the girl. “Let him alone! Let him alone!” She was almost weeping.

There was a sound of footsteps in the doorway. Julian Mastakovich started and straightened up his respectable body. The red-haired boy was even more alarmed. He let go the girl’s hand, sidled along the wall, and

escaped through the drawing-room into the dining-room.

Not to attract attention, Julian Mastakovich also made for the dining-room. He was red as a lobster. The sight of himself in a mirror seemed to embarrass him. Presumably he was annoyed at his own ardour and impatience. Without due respect to his importance and dignity, his calculations had lured and pricked him to the greedy eagerness of a boy, who makes straight for his object-though this was not as yet an object; it only would be so in five years' time. I followed the worthy man into the dining-room, where I witnessed a remarkable play.

Julian Mastakovich, all flushed with vexation, venom in his look, began to threaten the red-haired boy. The red-haired boy retreated farther and farther until there was no place left for him to retreat to, and he did not know where to turn in his fright.

"Get out of here! What are you doing here? Get out, I say, you good-for-nothing! Stealing fruit, are you? Oh, so, stealing fruit! Get out, you freckle face, go to your likes!"

The frightened child, as a last desperate resort, crawled quickly under the table. His persecutor, completely infuriated, pulled out his large linen handkerchief and used it as a lash to drive the boy out of his position.

Here I must remark that Julian Mastakovich was a somewhat corpulent man, heavy, well-fed, puffy-cheeked, with a paunch and ankles as round as nuts. He perspired and puffed and panted. So strong was his dislike (or was it jealousy?) of the child that he actually began to carry on like a madman.

I laughed heartily. Julian Mastakovich turned. He was utterly confused and for a moment, apparently, quite oblivious of his immense importance. At that moment our host appeared in the doorway opposite. The boy crawled out from under the table and wiped his knees and elbows. Julian Mastakovich hastened to carry his handkerchief, which he had been dangling by the corner, to his nose. Our host looked at the three of us rather suspiciously. But, like a man who knows the world and can readily adjust himself, he seized upon the opportunity to lay hold of his very valuable guest and get what he wanted out of him.

"Here's the boy I was talking to you about," he said, indicating the red-haired child. "I took the liberty of presuming on your goodness in his behalf."

"Oh," replied Julian Mastakovich, still not quite master of himself.

"He's my governess's son," our host continued in a beseeching tone. "She's a poor creature, the widow of an honest official. That's why, if it were

possible for you-”

“Impossible, impossible!” Julian Mastakovich cried hastily. “You must excuse me, Philip Alexeyevich, I really cannot. I’ve made inquiries. There are no vacancies, and there is a waiting list of ten who have a greater right- I’m sorry.”

“Too bad,” said our host. “He’s a quiet, unobtrusive child.”

“A very naughty little rascal, I should say,” said Julian Mastakovich, wryly. “Go away, boy. Why are you here still? Be off with you to the other children.”

Unable to control himself, he gave me a sidelong glance. Nor could I control myself. I laughed straight in his face. He turned away and asked our host, in tones quite audible to me, who that odd young fellow was. They whispered to each other and left the room, disregarding me.

I shook with laughter. Then I, too, went to the drawing-room. There the great man, already surrounded by the fathers and mothers and the host and the hostess, had begun to talk eagerly with a lady to whom he had just been introduced. The lady held the rich little girl’s hand. Julian Mastakovich went into fulsome praise of her. He waxed ecstatic over the dear child’s beauty, her talents, her grace, her excellent breeding, plainly laying himself out to flatter the mother, who listened scarcely able to restrain tears of joy, while the father showed his delight by a gratified smile.

The joy was contagious. Everybody shared in it. Even the children were obliged to stop playing so as not to disturb the conversation. The atmosphere was surcharged with awe. I heard the mother of the important little girl, touched to her profoundest depths, ask Julian Mastakovich in the choicest language of courtesy, whether he would honour them by coming to see them. I heard Julian Mastakovich accept the invitation with unfeigned enthusiasm. Then the guests scattered decorously to different parts of the room, and I heard them, with veneration in their tones, extol the business man, the business man’s wife, the business man’s daughter, and, especially, Julian Mastakovich.

“Is he married?” I asked out loud of an acquaintance of mine standing beside Julian Mastakovich.

Julian Mastakovich gave me a venomous look.

“No,” answered my acquaintance, profoundly shocked by my-intentional-indiscretion.

Not long ago I passed the Church of-. I was struck by the concourse of

people gathered there to witness a wedding. It was a dreary day. A drizzling rain was beginning to come down. I made my way through the throng into the church. The bridegroom was a round, well-fed, pot-bellied little man, very much dressed up. He ran and fussed about and gave orders and arranged things. Finally word was passed that the bride was coming. I pushed through the crowd, and I beheld a marvellous beauty whose first spring was scarcely commencing. But the beauty was pale and sad. She looked distracted. It seemed to me even that her eyes were red from recent weeping. The classic severity of every line of her face imparted a peculiar significance and solemnity to her beauty. But through that severity and solemnity, through the sadness, shone the innocence of a child. There was something inexpressibly naïve, unsettled and young in her features, which, without words, seemed to plead for mercy.

They said she was just sixteen years old. I looked at the bridegroom carefully. Suddenly I recognised Julian Mastakovich, whom I had not seen again in all those five years. Then I looked at the bride again.-Good God! I made my way, as quickly as I could, out of the church. I heard gossiping in the crowd about the bride's wealth-about her dowry of five hundred thousand rubles-so and so much for pocket money.

"Then his calculations were correct," I thought, as I pressed out into the street.

IVAN TURGENEV

FIRST LOVE

THE guests had long since departed. The clock struck half-past twelve. There remained in the room only the host, Sergyéi Nikoláevitch, and Vladímir Petróvitch.

The host rang and ordered the remains of the supper to be removed.-“So then, the matter is settled,”-he said, ensconcing himself more deeply in his arm-chair, and lighting a cigar:-“each of us is to narrate the history of his first love. ’Tis your turn, Sergyéi Nikoláevitch.”

Sergyéi Nikoláevitch, a rather corpulent man, with a plump, fair-skinned face, first looked at the host, then raised his eyes to the ceiling.-“I had no first love,”-he began at last:-“I began straight off with the second.”

“How was that?”

“Very simply. I was eighteen years of age when, for the first time, I dangled after a very charming young lady; but I courted her as though it were no new thing to me: exactly as I courted others afterward. To tell the truth, I fell in love, for the first and last time, at the age of six, with my nurse;-but that is a very long time ago. The details of our relations have been erased from my memory; but even if I remembered them, who would be interested in them?”

“Then what are we to do?”-began the host.-“There was nothing very startling about my first love either; I never fell in love with any one before Anna Ivánovna, now my wife; and everything ran as though on oil with us; our fathers made up the match, we very promptly fell in love with each other, and entered the bonds of matrimony without delay. My story can be told in two words. I must confess, gentlemen, that in raising the question of first love, I set my hopes on you, I will not say old, but yet no longer young bachelors. Will not you divert us with something, Vladímir Petróvitch?”

“My first love belongs, as a matter of fact, not altogether to the ordinary category,”-replied, with a slight hesitation, Vladímir Petróvitch, a man of forty, whose black hair was sprinkled with grey.

“Ah!”-said the host and Sergyéi Nikoláevitch in one breath.-“So much the better... Tell us.”

“As you like... or no: I will not narrate; I am no great hand at telling a story; it turns out dry and short, or long-drawn-out and artificial. But if you will permit me, I will write down all that I remember in a note-book, and will read it aloud to you.”

At first the friends would not consent, but Vladímir Petróvitch insisted on having his own way. A fortnight later they came together again, and Vladímir

Sergyéitch kept his promise.

This is what his note-book contained.

I

I was sixteen years old at the time. The affair took place in the summer of 1833.

I was living in Moscow, in my parents' house. They had hired a villa near the Kalúga barrier, opposite the Neskútchny Park.[2]-I was preparing for the university, but was working very little and was not in a hurry.

No one restricted my freedom. I had done whatever I pleased ever since I had parted with my last French governor, who was utterly unable to reconcile himself to the thought that he had fallen "like a bomb" (*comme une bombe*) into Russia, and with a stubborn expression on his face, wallowed in bed for whole days at a time. My father treated me in an indifferently-affectionate way; my mother paid hardly any attention to me, although she had no children except me: other cares engrossed her. My father, still a young man and very handsome, had married her from calculation; she was ten years older than he. My mother led a melancholy life: she was incessantly in a state of agitation, jealousy, and wrath-but not in the presence of my father; she was very much afraid of him, and he maintained a stern, cold, and distant manner... I have never seen a man more exquisitely calm, self-confident, and self-controlled.

I shall never forget the first weeks I spent at the villa. The weather was magnificent; we had left town the ninth of May, on St. Nicholas's day. I rambled,-sometimes in the garden of our villa, sometimes in Neskútchny Park, sometimes beyond the city barriers; I took with me some book or other,-a course of Kaidánoff,-but rarely opened it, and chiefly recited aloud poems, of which I knew a great many by heart. The blood was fermenting in me, and my heart was aching-so sweetly and absurdly; I was always waiting for something, shrinking at something, and wondering at everything, and was all ready for anything at a moment's notice. My fancy was beginning to play, and hovered swiftly ever around the selfsame image, as martins hover round a belfry at sunset. But even athwart my tears and athwart the melancholy, inspired now by a melodious verse, now by the beauty of the evening, there peered forth, like grass in springtime, the joyous sensation of young, bubbling life.

I had a saddle-horse; I was in the habit of saddling it myself, and when I rode off alone as far as possible, in some direction, launching out at a gallop

and fancying myself a knight at a tourney-how blithely the wind whistled in my ears!-Or, turning my face skyward, I welcomed its beaming light and azure into my open soul.

I remember, at that time, the image of woman, the phantom of woman's love, almost never entered my mind in clearly-defined outlines; but in everything I thought, in everything I felt, there lay hidden the half-conscious, shamefaced presentiment of something new, inexpressibly sweet, feminine...

This presentiment, this expectation permeated my whole being; I breathed it, it coursed through my veins in every drop of blood... it was fated to be speedily realised.

Our villa consisted of a wooden manor-house with columns, and two tiny outlying wings; in the wing to the left a tiny factory of cheap wall-papers was installed... More than once I went thither to watch how half a score of gaunt, dishevelled young fellows in dirty smocks and with tipsy faces were incessantly galloping about at the wooden levers which jammed down the square blocks of the press, and in that manner, by the weight of their puny bodies, printed the motley-hued patterns of the wall-papers. The wing on the right stood empty and was for rent. One day-three weeks after the ninth of May-the shutters on the windows of this wing were opened, and women's faces made their appearance in them; some family or other had moved into it. I remember how, that same day at dinner, my mother inquired of the butler who our new neighbours were, and on hearing the name of Princess Zasyékin, said at first, not without some respect:-"Ah! a Princess"... and then she added:-"She must be some poor person!"

"They came in three hired carriages, ma'am,"-remarked the butler, as he respectfully presented a dish. "They have no carriage of their own, ma'am, and their furniture is of the very plainest sort."

"Yes,"-returned my mother,-"and nevertheless, it is better so."

My father shot a cold glance at her; she subsided into silence.

As a matter of fact, Princess Zasyékin could not be a wealthy woman: the wing she had hired was so old and tiny and low-roofed that people in the least well-to-do would not have been willing to inhabit it.-However, I let this go in at one ear and out at the other. The princely title had little effect on me: I had recently been reading Schiller's "The Brigands."

II

I had a habit of prowling about our garden every evening, gun in hand, and standing guard against the crows.-I had long cherished a hatred for those wary, rapacious and crafty birds. On the day of which I have been speaking, I went into the garden as usual, and, after having fruitlessly made the round of all the alleys (the crows recognised me from afar, and merely cawed spasmodically at a distance), I accidentally approached the low fence which separated *our* territory from the narrow strip of garden extending behind the right-hand wing and appertaining to it. I was walking along with drooping head. Suddenly I heard voices: I glanced over the fence-and was petrified... A strange spectacle presented itself to me.

A few paces distant from me, on a grass-plot between green raspberry-bushes, stood a tall, graceful young girl, in a striped, pink frock and with a white kerchief on her head; around her pressed four young men, and she was tapping them in turn on the brow with those small grey flowers, the name of which I do not know, but which are familiar to children; these little flowers form tiny sacs, and burst with a pop when they are struck against anything hard. The young men offered their foreheads to her so willingly, and in the girl's movements (I saw her form in profile) there was something so bewitching, caressing, mocking, and charming, that I almost cried aloud in wonder and pleasure; and I believe I would have given everything in the world if those lovely little fingers had only consented to tap me on the brow. My gun slid down on the grass, I forgot everything, I devoured with my eyes that slender waist, and the neck and the beautiful arms, and the slightly ruffled fair hair, the intelligent eyes and those lashes, and the delicate cheek beneath them...

"Young man, hey there, young man!"-suddenly spoke up a voice near me:-"Is it permissible to stare like that at strange young ladies?"

I trembled all over, I was stupefied... Beside me, on the other side of the fence, stood a man with closely-clipped black hair, gazing ironically at me. At that same moment, the young girl turned toward me... I beheld huge grey eyes in a mobile, animated face-and this whole face suddenly began to quiver, and to laugh, and the white teeth gleamed from it, the brows elevated themselves in an amusing way... I flushed, picked up my gun from the ground, and, pursued by ringing but not malicious laughter, I ran to my own

room, flung myself on the bed, and covered my face with my hands. My heart was fairly leaping within me; I felt very much ashamed and very merry: I experienced an unprecedented emotion.

After I had rested awhile, I brushed my hair, made myself neat and went down-stairs to tea. The image of the young girl floated in front of me; my heart had ceased to leap, but ached in an agreeable sort of way.

“What ails thee?”-my father suddenly asked me:-“hast thou killed a crow?”

I was on the point of telling him all, but refrained and only smiled to myself. As I was preparing for bed, I whirled round thrice on one foot, I know not why, pomaded my hair, got into bed and slept all night like a dead man. Toward morning I awoke for a moment, raised my head, cast a glance of rapture around me-and fell asleep again.

III

“How am I to get acquainted with them?” was my first thought, as soon as I awoke in the morning. I went out into the garden before tea, but did not approach too close to the fence, and saw no one. After tea I walked several times up and down the street in front of the villa, and cast a distant glance at the windows... I thought I descried *her* face behind the curtains, and retreated with all possible despatch. “But I must get acquainted,”-I thought, as I walked with irregular strides up and down the sandy stretch which extends in front of the Neskútchny Park... “but how? that is the question.” I recalled the most trifling incidents of the meeting on the previous evening; for some reason, her manner of laughing at me presented itself to me with particular clearness... But while I was fretting thus and constructing various plans, Fate was already providing for me.

During my absence, my mother had received a letter from her new neighbour on grey paper sealed with brown wax, such as is used only on postal notices, and on the corks of cheap wine. In this letter, written in illiterate language, and with a slovenly chirography, the Princess requested my mother to grant her her protection: my mother, according to the Princess’s words, was well acquainted with the prominent people on whom the fortune of herself and her children depended, as she had some extremely important law-suits: “I apeal tyou,”-she wrote,-“as a knoble woman to a knoble woman, and moarover, it is agriable to me to makeus of this oportunity.” In conclusion, she asked permission of my mother to call upon her. I found my mother in an unpleasant frame of mind: my father was not at home, and she had no one with whom to take counsel. It was impossible not to reply to a “knoble woman,” and to a Princess into the bargain; but how to reply perplexed my mother. It seemed to her ill-judged to write a note in French, and my mother was not strong in Russian orthography herself-and was aware of the fact-and did not wish to compromise herself. She was delighted at my arrival, and immediately ordered me to go to the Princess and explain to her verbally that my mother was always ready, to the extent of her ability, to be of service to Her Radiance,[3] and begged that she would call upon her about one o’clock.

This unexpectedly swift fulfilment of my secret wishes both delighted and frightened me; but I did not betray the emotion which held possession of me,

and preliminarily betook myself to my room for the purpose of donning a new neckcloth and coat; at home I went about in a round-jacket and turn-over collars, although I detested them greatly.

IV

In the cramped and dirty anteroom of the wing, which I entered with an involuntary trembling of my whole body, I was received by a grey-haired old serving-man with a face the hue of dark copper, pig-like, surly little eyes, and such deep wrinkles on his forehead as I had never seen before in my life. He was carrying on a platter the gnawed spinal bone of a herring, and, pushing to with his foot the door which led into the adjoining room, he said abruptly:-“What do you want?”

“Is Princess Zasyékin at home?”-I inquired.

“Vonifáty!”-screamed a quavering female voice on the other side of the door.

The servant silently turned his back on me, thereby displaying the badly-worn rear of his livery with its solitary, rusted, armoured button, and went away, leaving the platter on the floor.

“Hast thou been to the police-station?”-went on that same feminine voice. The servant muttered something in reply.-“Hey?... Some one has come?”-was the next thing audible... “The young gentleman from next door?-Well, ask him in.”

“Please come into the drawing-room, sir,”-said the servant, making his appearance again before me, and picking up the platter from the floor. I adjusted my attire and entered the “drawing-room.”

I found myself in a tiny and not altogether clean room, with shabby furniture which seemed to have been hastily set in place. At the window, in an easy-chair with a broken arm, sat a woman of fifty, with uncovered hair[4] and plain-featured, clad in an old green gown, and with a variegated worsted kerchief round her neck. Her small black eyes fairly bored into me.

I went up to her and made my bow.

“I have the honour of speaking to Princess Zasyékin?”

“I am Princess Zasyékin: and you are the son of Mr. B-?”

“Yes, madam. I have come to you with a message from my mother.”

“Pray be seated. Vonifáty! where are my keys? Hast thou seen them?”

I communicated to Madame Zasyékin my mother’s answer to her note. She listened to me, tapping the window-pane with her thick, red fingers, and when I had finished she riveted her eyes on me once more.

“Very good; I shall certainly go,”-said she at last.-“But how young you

are still! How old are you, allow me to ask?"

"Sixteen,"-I replied with involuntary hesitation.

The Princess pulled out of her pocket some dirty, written documents, raised them up to her very nose and began to sort them over.

"'Tis a good age,"-she suddenly articulated, turning and fidgeting in her chair.-"And please do not stand on ceremony. We are plain folks."

"Too plain,"-I thought, with involuntary disgust taking in with a glance the whole of her homely figure.

At that moment, the other door of the drawing-room was swiftly thrown wide open, and on the threshold appeared the young girl whom I had seen in the garden the evening before. She raised her hand and a smile flitted across her face.

"And here is my daughter,"-said the Princess, pointing at her with her elbow.-"Zínotchka, the son of our neighbour, Mr. B-. What is your name, permit me to inquire?"

"Vladímir,"-I replied, rising and lisping with agitation.

"And your patronymic?"

"Petróvitch."

"Yes! I once had an acquaintance, a chief of police, whose name was Vladímir Petróvitch also. Vonifáty! don't hunt for the keys; the keys are in my pocket."

The young girl continued to gaze at me with the same smile as before, slightly puckering up her eyes and bending her head a little on one side.

"I have already seen M'sieu Voldemar,"-she began. (The silvery tone of her voice coursed through me like a sweet chill.)-"Will you permit me to call you so?"

"Pray do, madam,"-I lisped.

"Where was that?"-asked the Princess.

The young Princess did not answer her mother.

"Are you busy now?"-she said, without taking her eyes off me.

"Not in the least, madam."

"Then will you help me to wind some wool? Come hither, to me."

She nodded her head at me and left the drawing-room. I followed her.

In the room which we entered the furniture was a little better and was arranged with great taste.-But at that moment I was almost unable to notice anything; I moved as though in a dream and felt a sort of intense sensation of well-being verging on stupidity throughout my frame.

The young Princess sat down, produced a knot of red wool, and pointing me to a chair opposite her, she carefully unbound the skein and placed it on my hands. She did all this in silence, with a sort of diverting deliberation, and with the same brilliant and crafty smile on her slightly parted lips. She began to wind the wool upon a card doubled together, and suddenly illumined me with such a clear, swift glance, that I involuntarily dropped my eyes. When her eyes, which were generally half closed, opened to their full extent her face underwent a complete change; it was as though light had inundated it.

“What did you think of me yesterday, M’sieu Voldemar?”-she asked, after a brief pause.-“You certainly must have condemned me?”

“I... Princess... I thought nothing... how can I...” I replied, in confusion.

“Listen,”-she returned.-“You do not know me yet; I want people always to speak the truth to me. You are sixteen, I heard, and I am twenty-one; you see that I am a great deal older than you, and therefore you must always speak the truth to me... and obey me,”-she added.-“Look at me; why don’t you look at me?”

I became still more confused; but I raised my eyes to hers, nevertheless. She smiled, only not in her former manner, but with a different, an approving smile.-“Look at me,”-she said, caressingly lowering her voice:-“I don’t like that... Your face pleases me; I foresee that we shall be friends. And do you like me?”-she added slyly.

“Princess...” I was beginning...

“In the first place, call me Zinaída Alexándrovna; and in the second place,-what sort of a habit is it for children”-(she corrected herself)-“for young men-not to say straight out what they feel? You do like me, don’t you?”

Although it was very pleasant to me to have her talk so frankly to me, still I was somewhat nettled. I wanted to show her that she was not dealing with a small boy, and, assuming as easy and serious a mien as I could, I said:-“Of course I like you very much, Zinaída Alexándrovna; I have no desire to conceal the fact.”

She shook her head, pausing at intervals.-“Have you a governor?”-she suddenly inquired.

“No, I have not had a governor this long time past.”

I lied: a month had not yet elapsed since I had parted with my Frenchman.

“Oh, yes, I see: you are quite grown up.”

She slapped me lightly on the fingers.-“Hold your hands straight!”-And

she busied herself diligently with winding her ball.

I took advantage of the fact that she did not raise her eyes, and set to scrutinising her, first by stealth, then more and more boldly. Her face seemed to me even more charming than on the day before: everything about it was so delicate, intelligent and lovely. She was sitting with her back to the window, which was hung with a white shade; a ray of sunlight making its way through that shade inundated with a flood of light her fluffy golden hair, her innocent neck, sloping shoulders, and calm, tender bosom.-I gazed at her-and how near and dear she became to me! It seemed to me both that I had known her for a long time and that I had known nothing and had not lived before she came... She wore a rather dark, already shabby gown, with an apron; I believe I would willingly have caressed every fold of that gown and of that apron. The tips of her shoes peeped out from under her gown; I would have bowed down to those little boots... “And here I sit, in front of her,”-I thought.-“I have become acquainted with her... what happiness, my God!” I came near bouncing out of my chair with rapture, but I merely dangled my feet to and fro a little, like a child who is enjoying dainties.

I felt as much at my ease as a fish does in water, and I would have liked never to leave that room again as long as I lived.

Her eyelids slowly rose, and again her brilliant eyes beamed caressingly before me, and again she laughed.

“How you stare at me!”-she said slowly, shaking her finger at me.

I flushed scarlet... “She understands all, she sees all,”-flashed through my head. “And how could she fail to see and understand all?”

Suddenly there was a clattering in the next room, and a sword clanked.

“Zína!”-screamed the old Princess from the drawing-room.-“Byelovzóroff has brought thee a kitten.”

“A kitten!”-cried Zinaída, and springing headlong from her chair, she flung the ball on my knees and ran out.

I also rose, and, laying the skein of wool on the window-sill, went into the drawing-room, and stopped short in amazement. In the centre of the room lay a kitten with outstretched paws; Zinaída was kneeling in front of it, and carefully raising its snout. By the side of the young Princess, taking up nearly the entire wall-space between the windows, was visible a fair-complexioned, curly-haired young man, a hussar, with a rosy face and protruding eyes.

“How ridiculous!”-Zinaída kept repeating:-“and its eyes are not grey, but green, and what big ears it has! Thank you, Viktór Egóritch! you are very

kind.”

The hussar, in whom I recognised one of the young men whom I had seen on the preceding evening, smiled and bowed, clicking his spurs and clanking the links of his sword as he did so.

“You were pleased to say yesterday that you wished to possess a striped kitten with large ears... so I have got it, madam. Your word is my law.”-And again he bowed.

The kitten mewed faintly, and began to sniff at the floor.

“He is hungry!”-cried Zinaída.-“Vonifáty! Sónya! bring some milk.”

The chambermaid, in an old yellow gown and with a faded kerchief on her head, entered with a saucer of milk in her hand, and placed it in front of the kitten. The kitten quivered, blinked, and began to lap.

“What a rosy tongue it has,”-remarked Zinaída, bending her head down almost to the floor, and looking sideways at it, under its very nose.

The kitten drank its fill, and began to purr, affectedly contracting and relaxing its paws. Zinaída rose to her feet, and turning to the maid, said indifferently:-“Take it away.”

“Your hand-in return for the kitten,”-said the hussar, displaying his teeth, and bending over the whole of his huge body, tightly confined in a new uniform.

“Both hands,”-replied Zinaída, offering him her hands. While he was kissing them, she gazed at me over his shoulder.

I stood motionless on one spot, and did not know whether to laugh or to say something, or to hold my peace. Suddenly, through the open door of the anteroom, the figure of our footman, Feódor, caught my eye. He was making signs to me. I mechanically went out to him.

“What dost thou want?”-I asked.

“Your mamma has sent for you,”-he said in a whisper.-“She is angry because you do not return with an answer.”

“Why, have I been here long?”

“More than an hour.”

“More than an hour!”-I repeated involuntarily, and returning to the drawing-room, I began to bow and scrape my foot.

“Where are you going?”-the young Princess asked me, with a glance at the hussar.

“I must go home, madam. So I am to say,”-I added, addressing the old woman,-“that you will call upon us at two o’clock.”

“Say that, my dear fellow.”

The old Princess hurriedly drew out her snuffbox, and took a pinch so noisily that I fairly jumped.-“Say that,”-she repeated, tearfully blinking and grunting.

I bowed once more, turned and left the room with the same sensation of awkwardness in my back which a very young man experiences when he knows that people are staring after him.

“Look here, M’sieu Voldemar, you must drop in to see us,”-called Zinaída, and again burst out laughing.

“What makes her laugh all the time?” I thought, as I wended my way home accompanied by Feódor, who said nothing to me, but moved along disapprovingly behind me. My mother reproved me, and inquired, with surprise, “What could I have been doing so long at the Princess’s?” I made her no answer, and went off to my own room. I had suddenly grown very melancholy... I tried not to weep... I was jealous of the hussar.

V

The Princess, according to her promise, called on my mother, and did not please her. I was not present at their meeting, but at table my mother narrated to my father that that Princess Zasyékin seemed to her a *femme très vulgaire*; that she had bored her immensely with her requests that she would intervene on her behalf with Prince Sergyéi; that she was always having such law-suits and affairs, *-de vilaines affaires d'argent*, and that she must be a great rogue. But my mother added that she had invited her with her daughter to dine on the following day (on hearing the words "with her daughter," I dropped my nose into my plate), -because, notwithstanding, she was a neighbour, and with a name. Thereupon my father informed my mother that he now recalled who the lady was: that in his youth he had known the late Prince Zasyékin, a capitally-educated but flighty and captious man; that in society he was called "*le Parisien*," because of his long residence in Paris; that he had been very wealthy, but had gambled away all his property-and, no one knew why, though probably it had been for the sake of the money, -"although he might have made a better choice," -added my father, with a cold smile, -he had married the daughter of some clerk in a chancellery, and after his marriage had gone into speculation, and ruined himself definitively.

"'Tis a wonder she did not try to borrow money," -remarked my mother.

"She is very likely to do it," -said my father, calmly. -"Does she speak French?"

"Very badly."

"M-m-m. However, that makes no difference. I think thou saidst that thou hadst invited her daughter; some one assured me that she is a very charming and well-educated girl."

"Ah! Then she does not take after her mother."

"Nor after her father," -returned my father. -"He was also well educated, but stupid."

My mother sighed, and became thoughtful. My father relapsed into silence. I felt very awkward during the course of that conversation.

After dinner I betook myself to the garden, but without my gun. I had pledged my word to myself that I would not go near the "Zasyékin garden"; but an irresistible force drew me thither, and not in vain. I had no sooner approached the fence than I caught sight of Zinaída. This time she was alone.

She was holding a small book in her hands and strolling slowly along the path. She did not notice me. I came near letting her slip past; but suddenly caught myself up and coughed.

She turned round but did not pause, put aside with one hand the broad blue ribbon of her round straw hat, looked at me, smiled quietly, and again riveted her eyes on her book.

I pulled off my cap, and after fidgeting about a while on one spot, I went away with a heavy heart. "*Que suis-je pour elle?*"-I thought (God knows why) in French.

Familiar footsteps resounded behind me; I glanced round and beheld my father advancing toward me with swift, rapid strides.

"Is that the young Princess?"-he asked me.

"Yes."

"Dost thou know her?"

"I saw her this morning at the Princess her mother's."

My father halted and, wheeling abruptly round on his heels, retraced his steps. As he came on a level with Zinaída he bowed courteously to her. She bowed to him in return, not without some surprise on her face, and lowered her book. I saw that she followed him with her eyes. My father always dressed very elegantly, originally and simply; but his figure had never seemed to me more graceful, never had his grey hat sat more handsomely on his curls, which were barely beginning to grow thin.

I was on the point of directing my course toward Zinaída, but she did not even look at me, but raised her book once more and walked away.

VI

I spent the whole of that evening and the following day in a sort of gloomy stupor. I remember that I made an effort to work, and took up Kaidánoff; but in vain did the large-printed lines and pages of the famous text-book flit before my eyes. Ten times in succession I read the words: "Julius Cæsar was distinguished for military daring," without understanding a word, and I flung aside my book. Before dinner I pomaded my hair again, and again donned my frock-coat and neckerchief.

"What's that for?"-inquired my mother.-"Thou art not a student yet, and God knows whether thou wilt pass thy examination. And thy round-jacket was made not very long ago. Thou must not discard it!"

"There are to be guests,"-I whispered, almost in despair.

"What nonsense! What sort of guests are they?"

I was compelled to submit. I exchanged my coat for my round-jacket, but did not remove my neckerchief. The Princess and her daughter made their appearance half an hour before dinner; the old woman had thrown a yellow shawl over her green gown, with which I was familiar, and had donned an old-fashioned mob-cap with ribbons of a fiery hue. She immediately began to talk about her notes of hand, to sigh and to bewail her poverty, and to "importune," but did not stand in the least upon ceremony; and she took snuff noisily and fidgeted and wriggled in her chair as before. It never seemed to enter her head that she was a Princess. On the other hand, Zinaída bore herself very stiffly, almost haughtily, like a real young Princess. Cold impassivity and dignity had made their appearance on her countenance, and I did not recognise her,-did not recognise her looks or her smile, although in this new aspect she seemed to me very beautiful. She wore a thin *barège* gown with pale-blue figures; her hair fell in long curls along her cheeks, in the English fashion: this coiffure suited the cold expression of her face.

My father sat beside her during dinner, and with the exquisite and imperturbable courtesy which was characteristic of him, showed attention to his neighbour. He glanced at her from time to time, and she glanced at him now and then, but in such a strange, almost hostile, manner. Their conversation proceeded in French;-I remember that I was surprised at the purity of Zinaída's accent. The old Princess, as before, did not restrain herself in the slightest degree during dinner, but ate a great deal and praised the food.

My mother evidently found her wearisome, and answered her with a sort of sad indifference; my father contracted his brows in a slight frown from time to time. My mother did not like Zinaída either.

“She’s a haughty young sprig,”-she said the next day.-“And when one comes to think of it, what is there for her to be proud of?-*avec sa mine de grisette!*”

“Evidently, thou hast not seen any grisettes,”-my father remarked to her.

“Of course I haven’t, God be thanked!... Only, how art thou capable of judging of them?”

Zinaída paid absolutely no attention whatever to me. Soon after dinner the old Princess began to take her leave.

“I shall rely upon your protection, Márya Nikoláevna and Piótr Vasílich,”-she said, in a sing-song tone, to my father and mother.-“What is to be done! I have seen prosperous days, but they are gone. Here am I a Radiance,”-she added, with an unpleasant laugh,-“but what’s the good of an honour when you’ve nothing to eat?”-My father bowed respectfully to her and escorted her to the door of the anteroom. I was standing there in my round-jacket, and staring at the floor, as though condemned to death. Zinaída’s behaviour toward me had definitively annihilated me. What, then, was my amazement when, as she passed me, she whispered to me hastily, and with her former affectionate expression in her eyes:-“Come to us at eight o’clock, do you hear? without fail...” I merely threw my hands apart in amazement;-but she was already retreating, having thrown a white scarf over her head.

VII

Precisely at eight o'clock I entered the tiny wing inhabited by the Princess, clad in my coat, and with my hair brushed up into a crest on top of my head. The old servant glared surlily at me, and rose reluctantly from his bench. Merry voices resounded in the drawing-room. I opened the door and retreated a pace in astonishment. In the middle of the room, on a chair, stood the young Princess, holding a man's hat in front of her; around the chair thronged five men. They were trying to dip their hands into the hat, but she kept raising it on high and shaking it violently. On catching sight of me she exclaimed:-

"Stay, stay! Here's a new guest; he must be given a ticket,"-and springing lightly from the chair, she seized me by the lapel of my coat.-"Come along,"-said she;--"why do you stand there? Messieurs, allow me to make you acquainted: this is Monsieur Voldemar, the son of our neighbour. And this,"-she added, turning to me, and pointing to the visitors in turn,-"is Count Malévsky, Doctor Lúshin, the poet Maidánoff, retired Captain Nirmátsky, and Byelovzóroff the hussar, whom you have already seen. I beg that you will love and favour each other."

I was so confused that I did not even bow to any one; in Doctor Lúshin I recognised that same swarthy gentleman who had so ruthlessly put me to shame in the garden; the others were strangers to me.

"Count!"-pursued Zinaída,-"write a ticket for M'sieu Voldemar."

"That is unjust,"-returned the Count, with a slight accent,-a very handsome and foppishly-attired man, with a dark complexion, expressive brown eyes, a thin, white little nose, and a slender moustache over his tiny mouth.-"He has not been playing at forfeits with us."

"'Tis unjust,"-repeated Byelovzóroff and the gentleman who had been alluded to as the retired Captain,-a man of forty, horribly pockmarked, curly-haired as a negro, round-shouldered, bow-legged, and dressed in a military coat without epaulets, worn open on the breast.

"Write a ticket, I tell you,"-repeated the Princess.-"What sort of a rebellion is this? M'sieu Voldemar is with us for the first time, and to-day no law applies to him. No grumbling-write; I will have it so."

The Count shrugged his shoulders, but submissively bowing his head, he took a pen in his white, ring-decked hand, tore off a scrap of paper and began

to write on it.

“Permit me at least to explain to M’sieu Voldemar what it is all about,”-began Lúshin, in a bantering tone;-“otherwise he will be utterly at a loss. You see, young man, we are playing at forfeits; the Princess must pay a fine, and the one who draws out the lucky ticket must kiss her hand. Do you understand what I have told you?”

I merely glanced at him and continued to stand as though in a fog, while the Princess again sprang upon the chair and again began to shake the hat. All reached up to her-I among the rest.

“Maidánoff,”-said the Princess to the tall young man with a gaunt face, tiny mole-like eyes and extremely long, black hair,-“you, as a poet, ought to be magnanimous and surrender your ticket to M’sieu Voldemar, so that he may have two chances instead of one.”

But Maidánoff shook his head in refusal and tossed his hair. I put in my hand into the hat after all the rest, drew out and unfolded a ticket... O Lord! what were my sensations when I beheld on it, “Kiss!”

“Kiss!”-I cried involuntarily.

“Bravo! He has won,”-chimed in the Princess.-“How delighted I am!”-She descended from the chair, and gazed into my eyes so clearly and sweetly that my heart fairly laughed with joy.-“And are you glad?”-she asked me.

“I?”... I stammered.

“Sell me your ticket,”-suddenly blurted out Byelovzóroff, right in my ear.-“I’ll give you one hundred rubles for it.”

I replied to the hussar by such a wrathful look that Zinaída clapped her hands, and Lúshin cried:-“That’s a gallant fellow!”

“But,”-he went on,-“in my capacity of master of ceremonies, I am bound to see that all the regulations are carried out. M’sieu Voldemar, get down on one knee. That is our rule.”

Zinaída stood before me with her head bent a little to one side, as though the better to scrutinise me, and offered me her hand with dignity. Things grew dim before my eyes; I tried to get down on one knee, plumped down on both knees, and applied my lips to Zinaída’s fingers in so awkward a manner that I scratched the tip of my nose slightly on her nails.

“Good!”-shouted Lúshin, and helped me to rise.

The game of forfeits continued. Zinaída placed me beside her. What penalties they did invent! Among other things, she had to impersonate a “statue”-and she selected as a pedestal the monstrously homely Nirmátsky,

ordering him to lie flat on the floor, and to tuck his face into his breast. The laughter did not cease for a single moment. All this noise and uproar, this unceremonious, almost tumultuous merriment, these unprecedented relations with strangers, fairly flew to my head; for I was a boy who had been reared soberly, and in solitude, and had grown up in a stately home of gentry. I became simply intoxicated, as though with wine. I began to shout with laughter and chatter more loudly than the rest, so that even the old Princess, who was sitting in the adjoining room with some sort of pettifogger from the Íversky Gate[5] who had been summoned for a conference, came out to take a look at me. But I felt so happy that, as the saying is, I didn't care a farthing for anybody's ridicule, or anybody's oblique glances.

Zinaída continued to display a preference for me and never let me leave her side. In one forfeit I was made to sit by her, covered up with one and the same silk kerchief: I was bound to tell her *my secret*. I remember how our two heads found themselves suddenly in choking, semi-transparent, fragrant gloom; how near and softly her eyes sparkled in that gloom, and how hotly her parted lips breathed; and her teeth were visible, and the tips of her hair tickled and burned me. I maintained silence. She smiled mysteriously and slyly, and at last whispered to me: "Well, what is it?" But I merely flushed and laughed, and turned away, and could hardly draw my breath. We got tired of forfeits, and began to play "string." Good heavens! what rapture I felt when, forgetting myself with gaping, I received from her a strong, sharp rap on my fingers; and how afterward I tried to pretend that I was yawning with inattention, but she mocked at me and did not touch my hands, which were awaiting the blow!

But what a lot of other pranks we played that same evening! We played on the piano, and sang, and danced, and represented a gipsy camp. We dressed Nirmátzky up like a bear, and fed him with water and salt. Count Malévsky showed us several card tricks, and ended by stacking the cards and dealing himself all the trumps at whist; upon which Lúshin "had the honour of congratulating him." Maidánoff declaimed to us fragments from his poem, "The Murderer" (this occurred in the very thick of romanticism), which he intended to publish in a black binding, with the title in letters of the colour of blood. We stole his hat from the knees of the pettifogger from the Íversky Gate, and made him dance the kazák dance by way of redeeming it. We dressed old Vonifáty up in a mob-cap, and the young Princess put on a man's hat... It is impossible to recount all we did. Byelovzóroff alone remained

most of the time in a corner, angry and frowning... Sometimes his eyes became suffused with blood, he grew scarlet all over and seemed to be on the very point of swooping down upon all of us and scattering us on all sides, like chips; but the Princess glanced at him, menaced him with her finger, and again he retired into his corner.

We were completely exhausted at last. The old Princess was equal to anything, as she put it,-no shouts disconcerted her,-but she felt tired and wished to rest. At midnight supper was served, consisting of a bit of old, dry cheese and a few cold patties filled with minced ham, which seemed to us more savoury than any pasty; there was only one bottle of wine, and that was rather queer:-dark, with a swollen neck, and the wine in it left an after-taste of pinkish dye; however, no one drank it. Weary and happy to exhaustion, I emerged from the wing; a thunder-storm seemed to be brewing; the black storm-clouds grew larger and crept across the sky, visibly altering their smoky outlines. A light breeze was uneasily quivering in the dark trees, and somewhere beyond the horizon the thunder was growling angrily and dully, as though to itself.

I made my way through the back door to my room. My nurse-valet was sleeping on the floor and I was obliged to step over him; he woke up, saw me, and reported that my mother was angry with me, and had wanted to send after me again, but that my father had restrained her. I never went to bed without having bidden my mother good night and begged her blessing. There was no help for it! I told my valet that I would undress myself and go to bed unaided,-and extinguished the candle. But I did not undress and I did not go to bed.

I seated myself on a chair and sat there for a long time, as though enchanted. That which I felt was so new and so sweet... I sat there, hardly looking around me and without moving, breathing slowly, and only laughing silently now, as I recalled, now inwardly turning cold at the thought that I was in love, that here it was, that love. Zinaída's face floated softly before me in the darkness-floated, but did not float away; her lips still smiled as mysteriously as ever, her eyes gazed somewhat askance at me, interrogatively, thoughtfully and tenderly... as at the moment when I had parted from her. At last I rose on tiptoe, stepped to my bed and cautiously, without undressing, laid my head on the pillow, as though endeavouring by the sharp movement to frighten off that wherewith I was filled to overflowing...

I lay down, but did not even close an eye. I speedily perceived that certain faint reflections kept constantly falling into my room... I raised myself and looked out of the window. Its frame was distinctly defined from the mysteriously and confusedly whitened panes. “‘Tis the thunder-storm,”-I thought,-and so, in fact, there was a thunder-storm; but it had passed very far away, so that even the claps of thunder were not audible; only in the sky long, indistinct, branching flashes of lightning, as it were, were uninterruptedly flashing up. They were not flashing up so much as they were quivering and twitching, like the wing of a dying bird. I rose, went to the window, and stood there until morning... The lightning-flashes never ceased for a moment; it was what is called a pitch-black night. I gazed at the dumb, sandy plain, at the dark mass of the Neskútny Park, at the yellowish façades of the distant buildings, which also seemed to be trembling at every faint flash... I gazed, and could not tear myself away; those dumb lightning-flashes, those restrained gleams, seemed to be responding to the dumb and secret outbursts which were flaring up within me also. Morning began to break; the dawn started forth in scarlet patches. With the approach of the sun the lightning-flashes grew paler and paler; they quivered more and more infrequently, and vanished at last, drowned in the sobering and unequivocal light of the breaking day.

And my lightning-flashes vanished within me also. I felt great fatigue and tranquillity... but Zinaída’s image continued to hover triumphantly over my soul. Only it, that image, seemed calm; like a flying swan from the marshy sedges, it separated itself from the other ignoble figures which surrounded it, and as I fell asleep, I bowed down before it for the last time in farewell and confiding adoration...

Oh, gentle emotions, soft sounds, kindness and calming of the deeply-moved soul, melting joy of the first feelings of love,-where are ye, where are ye?

VIII

On the following morning, when I went down-stairs to tea, my mother scolded me,-although less than I had anticipated,-and made me narrate how I had spent the preceding evening. I answered her in few words, omitting many particulars and endeavouring to impart to my narrative the most innocent of aspects.

“Nevertheless, they are not people *comme il faut*,”-remarked my mother;-“and I do not wish thee to run after them, instead of preparing thyself for the examination, and occupying thyself.”

As I knew that my mother’s anxiety was confined to these few words, I did not consider it necessary to make her any reply; but after tea my father linked his arm in mine, and betaking himself to the garden with me, made me tell him everything I had done and seen at the Zasyékins’.

My father possessed a strange influence over me, and our relations were strange. He paid hardly any attention to my education, but he never wounded me; he respected my liberty-he was even, if I may so express it, courteous to me... only, he did not allow me to get close to him. I loved him, I admired him; he seemed to me a model man; and great heavens! how passionately attached to him I should have been, had I not constantly felt his hand warding me off! On the other hand, when he wished, he understood how to evoke in me, instantaneously, with one word, one movement, unbounded confidence in him. My soul opened, I chatted with him as with an intelligent friend, as with an indulgent preceptor... then, with equal suddenness, he abandoned me, and again his hand repulsed me, caressingly and softly, but repulsed nevertheless.

Sometimes a fit of mirth came over him, and then he was ready to frolic and play with me like a boy (he was fond of every sort of energetic bodily exercise); once-only once-did he caress me with so much tenderness that I came near bursting into tears... But his mirth and tenderness also vanished without leaving a trace, and what had taken place between us gave me no hopes for the future; it was just as though I had seen it all in a dream. I used to stand and scrutinise his clever, handsome, brilliant face... and my heart would begin to quiver, and my whole being would yearn toward him,... and he would seem to feel what was going on within me, and would pat me on the cheek in passing-and either go away, or begin to occupy himself with

something, or suddenly freeze all over,-as he alone knew how to freeze,-and I would immediately shrivel up and grow frigid also. His rare fits of affection for me were never called forth by my speechless but intelligible entreaties; they always came upon him without warning. When meditating, in after years, upon my father's character, I came to the conclusion that he did not care for me or for family life; he loved something different, and enjoyed that other thing to the full. "Seize what thou canst thyself, and do not give thyself into any one's power; the whole art of life consists in belonging to one's self,"-he said to me once. On another occasion I, in my capacity of a young democrat, launched out in his presence into arguments about liberty (he was what I called "kind" that day; at such times one could say whatever one liked to him).-"Liberty,"-he repeated,-"but dost thou know what can give a man liberty?"

"What?"

"Will, his own will, and the power which it gives is better than liberty. Learn to will, and thou wilt be free, and wilt command."

My father wished, first of all and most of all, to enjoy life-and he did enjoy life... Perhaps he had a presentiment that he was not fated long to take advantage of the "art" of living: he died at the age of forty-two.

I described to my father in detail my visit to the Zasyékins. He listened to me half-attentively, half-abstractedly, as he sat on the bench and drew figures on the sand with the tip of his riding-whip. Now and then he laughed, glanced at me in a brilliant, amused sort of way, and spurred me on by brief questions and exclamations. At first I could not bring myself even to utter Zinaída's name, but I could not hold out, and began to laud her. My father still continued to laugh. Then he became thoughtful, dropped his eyes and rose to his feet.

I recalled the fact that, as he came out of the house, he had given orders that his horse should be saddled. He was a capital rider, and knew much better how to tame the wildest horses than did Mr. Rarey.

"Shall I ride with thee, papa?"-I asked him.

"No,"-he replied, and his face assumed its habitual indifferently-caressing expression.-"Go alone, if thou wishest; but tell the coachman that I shall not go."

He turned his back on me and walked swiftly away. I followed him with my eyes, until he disappeared beyond the gate. I saw his hat moving along the fence; he went into the Zasyékins' house.

He remained with them no more than an hour, but immediately thereafter went off to town and did not return home until evening.

After dinner I went to the Zasyékins' myself. I found no one in the drawing-room but the old Princess. When she saw me, she scratched her head under her cap with the end of her knitting-needle, and suddenly asked me: would I copy a petition for her?

"With pleasure,"-I replied, and sat down on the edge of a chair.

"Only look out, and see that you make the letters as large as possible,"-said the Princess, handing me a sheet of paper scrawled over in a slovenly manner:-"and couldn't you do it to-day, my dear fellow?"

"I will copy it this very day, madam."

The door of the adjoining room opened a mere crack and Zinaída's face showed itself in the aperture,-pale, thoughtful, with hair thrown carelessly back. She stared at me with her large, cold eyes, and softly shut the door.

"Zína,-hey there, Zína!"-said the old woman. Zinaída did not answer. I carried away the old woman's petition, and sat over it the whole evening.

IX

My "passion" began with that day. I remember that I then felt something of that which a man must feel when he enters the service: I had already ceased to be a young lad; I was in love. I have said that my passion dated from that day; I might have added that my sufferings also dated from that day. I languished when absent from Zinaída; my mind would not work, everything fell from my hands; I thought intently of her for days together... I languished... but in her presence I was no more at ease. I was jealous, I recognised my insignificance, I stupidly sulked and stupidly fawned; and, nevertheless, an irresistible force drew me to her, and every time I stepped across the threshold of her room, it was with an involuntary thrill of happiness. Zinaída immediately divined that I had fallen in love with her, and I never thought of concealing the fact; she mocked at my passion, played tricks on me, petted and tormented me. It is sweet to be the sole source, the autocratic and irresponsible cause of the greatest joys and the profoundest woe to another person, and I was like soft wax in Zinaída's hands. However, I was not the only one who was in love with her; all the men who were in the habit of visiting her house were crazy over her, and she kept them all in a leash at her feet. It amused her to arouse in them now hopes, now fears, to twist them about at her caprice (she called it, "knocking people against one another"),-and they never thought of resisting, and willingly submitted to her. In all her vivacious and beautiful being there was a certain peculiarly bewitching mixture of guilefulness and heedlessness, of artificiality and simplicity, of tranquillity and playfulness; over everything she did or said, over her every movement, hovered a light, delicate charm, and an original, sparkling force made itself felt in everything. And her face was incessantly changing and sparkling also; it expressed almost simultaneously derision, pensiveness, and passion. The most varied emotions, light, fleeting as the shadows of the clouds on a sunny, windy day, kept flitting over her eyes and lips.

Every one of her adorers was necessary to her. Byelovzóroff, whom she sometimes called "my wild beast," and sometimes simply "my own," would gladly have flung himself into the fire for her; without trusting to his mental capacities and other merits, he kept proposing that he should marry her, and hinting that the others were merely talking idly. Maidánoff responded to the

poetical chords of her soul: a rather cold man, as nearly all writers are, he assured her with intense force-and perhaps himself also-that he adored her. He sang her praises in interminable verses and read them to her with an unnatural and a genuine sort of enthusiasm. And she was interested in him and jeered lightly at him; she did not believe in him greatly, and after listening to his effusions she made him read Púshkin, in order, as she said, to purify the air. Lúshin, the sneering doctor, who was cynical in speech, knew her best of all and loved her best of all, although he abused her to her face and behind her back. She respected him, but would not let him go, and sometimes, with a peculiar, malicious pleasure, made him feel that he was in her hands. "I am a coquette, I am heartless, I have the nature of an actress," she said to him one day in my presence; "and 'tis well! So give me your hand and I will stick a pin into it, and you will feel ashamed before this young man, and it will hurt you; but nevertheless, Mr. Upright Man, you will be so good as to laugh." Lúshin flushed crimson, turned away and bit his lips, but ended by putting out his hand. She pricked it, and he actually did break out laughing... and she laughed also, thrusting the pin in pretty deeply and gazing into his eyes while he vainly endeavoured to glance aside...

I understood least of all the relations existing between Zinaída and Count Malévsky. That he was handsome, adroit, and clever even I felt, but the presence in him of some false, dubious element, was palpable even to me, a lad of sixteen, and I was amazed that Zinaída did not notice it. But perhaps she did detect that false element and it did not repel her. An irregular education, strange acquaintances, the constant presence of her mother, the poverty and disorder in the house-all this, beginning with the very freedom which the young girl enjoyed, together with the consciousness of her own superiority to the people who surrounded her, had developed in her a certain half-scornful carelessness and lack of exaction. No matter what happened-whether Vonifáty came to report that there was no sugar, or some wretched bit of gossip came to light, or the visitors got into a quarrel among themselves, she merely shook her curls, and said: "Nonsense!"-and grieved very little over it.

On the contrary, all my blood would begin to seethe when Malévsky would approach her, swaying his body cunningly like a fox, lean elegantly over the back of her chair and begin to whisper in her ear with a conceited and challenging smile, while she would fold her arms on her breast, gaze attentively at him and smile also, shaking her head the while.

“What possesses you to receive Malévsky?”-I asked her one day.

“Why, he has such handsome eyes,”-she replied.-“But that is no business of yours.”

“You are not to think that I am in love with him,”-she said to me on another occasion.-“No; I cannot love people upon whom I am forced to look down. I must have some one who can subdue me... And I shall not hit upon such an one, for God is merciful! I shall not spare any one who falls into my paws-no, no!”

“Do you mean to say that you will never fall in love?”

“And how about you? Don’t I love you?”-she said, tapping me on the nose with the tip of her glove.

Yes, Zinaída made great fun of me. For the space of three weeks I saw her every day; and what was there that she did not do to me! She came to us rarely, but I did not regret that; in our house she was converted into a young lady, a Princess,-and I avoided her. I was afraid of betraying myself to my mother; she was not at all well disposed toward Zinaída, and kept a disagreeable watch on us. I was not so much afraid of my father; he did not appear to notice me, and talked little with her, but that little in a peculiarly clever and significant manner. I ceased to work, to read; I even ceased to stroll about the environs and to ride on horseback. Like a beetle tied by the leg, I hovered incessantly around the beloved wing; I believe I would have liked to remain there forever... but that was impossible. My mother grumbled at me, and sometimes Zinaída herself drove me out. On such occasions I shut myself up in my own room, or walked off to the very end of the garden, climbed upon the sound remnant of a tall stone hothouse, and dangling my legs over the wall, I sat there for hours and stared,-stared without seeing anything. White butterflies lazily flitted among the nettles beside me; an audacious sparrow perched not far off on the half-demolished red bricks and twittered in an irritating manner, incessantly twisting his whole body about and spreading out his tail; the still distrustful crows now and then emitted a caw, as they sat high, high above me on the naked crest of a birch-tree; the sun and the wind played softly through its sparse branches; the chiming of the bells, calm and melancholy, at the Don Monastery was wafted to me now and then,-and I sat on, gazing and listening, and became filled with a certain nameless sensation which embraced everything: sadness and joy, and a presentiment of the future, and the desire and the fear of life. But I understood nothing at the time of all that which was fermenting within me, or

I would have called it all by one name, the name of Zinaída.

But Zinaída continued to play with me as a cat plays with a mouse. Now she coquetted with me, and I grew agitated and melted with emotion; now she repulsed me, and I dared not approach her, dared not look at her.

I remember that she was very cold toward me for several days in succession and I thoroughly quailed, and when I timidly ran to the wing to see them, I tried to keep near the old Princess, despite the fact that she was scolding and screaming a great deal just at that time: her affairs connected with her notes of hand were going badly, and she had also had two scenes with the police-captain of the precinct.

One day I was walking through the garden, past the familiar fence, when I caught sight of Zinaída. Propped up on both arms, she was sitting motionless on the grass. I tried to withdraw cautiously, but she suddenly raised her head and made an imperious sign to me. I became petrified on the spot; I did not understand her the first time. She repeated her sign. I immediately sprang over the fence and ran joyfully to her; but she stopped me with a look and pointed to the path a couple of paces from her. In my confusion, not knowing what to do, I knelt down on the edge of the path. She was so pale, such bitter grief, such profound weariness were revealed in her every feature, that my heart contracted within me, and I involuntarily murmured: "What is the matter with you?"

Zinaída put out her hand, plucked a blade of grass, bit it, and tossed it away as far as she could.

"Do you love me very much?"-she inquired suddenly.-"Yes?"

I made no answer,-and what answer was there for me to make?

"Yes,"-she repeated, gazing at me as before.-"It is so. They are the same eyes,"-she added, becoming pensive, and covering her face with her hands.-"Everything has become repulsive to me,"-she whispered;- "I would like to go to the end of the world; I cannot endure this, I cannot reconcile myself... And what is in store for me?... Akh, I am heavy at heart... my God, how heavy at heart!"

"Why?"-I timidly inquired.

Zinaída did not answer me and merely shrugged her shoulders. I continued to kneel and to gaze at her with profound melancholy. Every word of hers fairly cut me to the heart. At that moment, I think I would willingly have given my life to keep her from grieving. I gazed at her, and nevertheless, not understanding why she was heavy at heart, I vividly

pictured to myself how, in a fit of uncontrollable sorrow, she had suddenly gone into the garden, and had fallen on the earth, as though she had been mowed down. All around was bright and green; the breeze was rustling in the foliage of the trees, now and then rocking a branch of raspberry over Zinaída's head. Doves were cooing somewhere and the bees were humming as they flew low over the scanty grass. Overhead the sky shone blue,-but I was so sad...

"Recite some poetry to me,"-said Zinaída in a low voice, leaning on her elbow.-"I like to hear you recite verses. You make them go in a sing-song, but that does not matter, it is youthful. Recite to me: 'On the Hills of Georgia.'-Only, sit down first."

I sat down and recited, "On the Hills of Georgia."

"That it is impossible not to love,"-repeated Zinaída.-"That is why poetry is so nice; it says to us that which does not exist, and which is not only better than what does exist, but even more like the truth... 'That it is impossible not to love'?-I would like to, but cannot!"-Again she fell silent for a space, then suddenly started and rose to her feet.-"Come along. Maidánoff is sitting with mamma; he brought his poem to me, but I left him. He also is embittered now... how can it be helped? Some day you will find out... but you must not be angry with me!"

Zinaída hastily squeezed my hand, and ran on ahead. We returned to the wing. Maidánoff set to reading us his poem of "The Murderer," which had only just been printed, but I did not listen. He shrieked out his four-footed iambics in a sing-song voice; the rhymes alternated and jingled like sleigh-bells, hollow and loud; but I kept staring all the while at Zinaída, and striving to understand the meaning of her strange words.

"Or, perchance, a secret rival

Has unexpectedly subjugated thee?"

suddenly exclaimed Maidánoff through his nose-and my eyes and Zinaída's met. She dropped hers and blushed faintly. I saw that she was blushing, and turned cold with fright. I had been jealous before, but only at that moment did the thought that she had fallen in love flash through my mind. "My God! She is in love!"

X

My real tortures began from that moment. I cudgelled my brains, I pondered and pondered again, and watched Zinaída importunately, but secretly, as far as possible. A change had taken place in her, that was evident. She took to going off alone to walk, and walked a long while. Sometimes she did not show herself to her visitors; she sat for hours together in her chamber. This had not been her habit hitherto. Suddenly I became-or it seemed to me that I became-extremely penetrating. "Is it he? Or is it not he?"-I asked myself, as in trepidation I mentally ran from one of her admirers to another. Count Malévsky (although I felt ashamed to admit it for Zinaída's sake) privately seemed to me more dangerous than the others.

My powers of observation extended no further than the end of my own nose, and my dissimulation probably failed to deceive any one; at all events, Doctor Lúshin speedily saw through me. Moreover, he also had undergone a change of late; he had grown thin, he laughed as frequently as ever, but somehow it was in a duller, more spiteful, a briefer way;-an involuntary, nervous irritability had replaced his former light irony and feigned cynicism.

"Why are you forever tagging on here, young man?"-he said to me one day, when he was left alone with me in the Zasyékins' drawing-room. (The young Princess had not yet returned from her stroll and the shrill voice of the old Princess was resounding in the upper story; she was wrangling with her maid.)-"You ought to be studying your lessons, working while you are young;-but instead of that, what are you doing?"

"You cannot tell whether I work at home,"-I retorted not without arrogance, but also not without confusion.

"Much work you do! That's not what you have in your head. Well, I will not dispute... at your age, that is in the natural order of things. But your choice is far from a happy one. Can't you see what sort of a house this is?"

"I do not understand you,"-I remarked.

"You don't understand me? So much the worse for you. I regard it as my duty to warn you. Fellows like me, old bachelors, may sit here: what harm will it do us? We are a hardened lot. You can't pierce our hide, but your skin is still tender; the air here is injurious for you,-believe me, you may become infected."

"How so?"

“Because you may. Are you healthy now? Are you in a normal condition? Is what you are feeling useful to you, good for you?”

“But what am I feeling?”-said I;-and in my secret soul I admitted that the doctor was right.

“Eh, young man, young man,”-pursued the doctor, with an expression as though something extremely insulting to me were contained in those two words;-“there’s no use in your dissimulating, for what you have in your soul you still show in your face, thank God! But what’s the use of arguing? I would not come hither myself, if...” (the doctor set his teeth)... “if I were not such an eccentric fellow. Only this is what amazes me-how you, with your intelligence, can fail to see what is going on around you.”

“But what is going on?”-I interposed, pricking up my ears.

The doctor looked at me with a sort of sneering compassion.

“A nice person I am,”-said he, as though speaking to himself.-“What possessed me to say that to him. In a word,”-he added, raising his voice,-“I repeat to you: the atmosphere here is not good for you. You find it pleasant here, and no wonder! And the scent of a hothouse is pleasant also-but one cannot live in it! Hey! hearken to me,-set to work again on Kaidánoff.”

The old Princess entered and began to complain to the doctor of toothache. Then Zinaída made her appearance.

“Here,”-added the old Princess,-“scold her, doctor, do. She drinks iced water all day long; is that healthy for her, with her weak chest?”

“Why do you do that?”-inquired Lúshin.

“But what result can it have?”

“What result? You may take cold and die.”

“Really? Is it possible? Well, all right-that just suits me!”

“You don’t say so!”-growled the doctor. The old Princess went away.

“I do say so,”-retorted Zinaída.-“Is living such a cheerful thing? Look about you... Well-is it nice? Or do you think that I do not understand it, do not feel it? It affords me pleasure to drink iced water, and you can seriously assure me that such a life is worth too much for me to imperil it for a moment’s pleasure-I do not speak of happiness.”

“Well, yes,”-remarked Lúshin:-“caprice and independence... Those two words sum you up completely; your whole nature lies in those two words.”

Zinaída burst into a nervous laugh.

“You’re too late by one mail, my dear doctor. You observe badly; you are falling behind.-Put on your spectacles.-I am in no mood for caprices now;

how jolly to play pranks on you or on myself!-and as for independence... M'sieu Voldemar,"-added Zinaída, suddenly stamping her foot,-"don't wear a melancholy face. I cannot endure to have people commiserating me."-She hastily withdrew.

"This atmosphere is injurious, injurious to you, young man,"-said Lúshin to me once more.

XI

On the evening of that same day the customary visitors assembled at the Zasyékins'; I was among the number.

The conversation turned on Maidánoff's poem; Zinaída candidly praised it.-"But do you know what?"-she said:-"If I were a poet, I would select other subjects. Perhaps this is all nonsense, but strange thoughts sometimes come into my head, especially when I am wakeful toward morning, when the sky is beginning to turn pink and grey.-I would, for example... You will not laugh at me?"

"No! No!"-we all exclaimed with one voice.

"I would depict,"-she went on, crossing her arms on her breast, and turning her eyes aside,-"a whole company of young girls, by night, in a big boat, on a tranquil river. The moon is shining, and they are all in white and wear garlands of white flowers, and they are singing, you know, something in the nature of a hymn."

"I understand, I understand, go on,"-said Maidánoff significantly and dreamily.

"Suddenly there is a noise-laughter, torches, tambourines on the shore... It is a throng of bacchantes running with songs and outcries. It is your business to draw the picture, Mr. Poet... only I would like to have the torches red and very smoky, and that the eyes of the bacchantes should gleam beneath their wreaths, and that the wreaths should be dark. Don't forget also tiger-skins and cups-and gold, a great deal of gold."

"But where is the gold to be?" inquired Maidánoff, tossing back his lank hair and inflating his nostrils.

"Where? On the shoulders, the hands, the feet, everywhere. They say that in ancient times women wore golden rings on their ankles.-The bacchantes call the young girls in the boat to come to them. The girls have ceased to chant their hymn,-they cannot go on with it,-but they do not stir; the river drifts them to the shore. And now suddenly one of them rises quietly... This must be well described: how she rises quietly in the moonlight, and how startled her companions are... She has stepped over the edge of the boat, the bacchantes have surrounded her, they have dashed off into the night, into the gloom... Present at this point smoke in clouds; and everything has become thoroughly confused. Nothing is to be heard but their whimpering, and her

wreath has been left lying on the shore.”

Zinaída ceased speaking. “Oh, she is in love!”-I thought again.

“Is that all?”-asked Maidánoff.

“That is all,”-she replied.

“That cannot be made the subject of an entire poem,”-he remarked pompously,-“but I will utilise your idea for some lyrical verses.”

“In the romantic vein?”-asked Malévsky.

“Of course, in the romantic vein-in Byron’s style.”

“But in my opinion, Hugo is better than Byron,”-remarked the young Count, carelessly:-“he is more interesting.”

“Hugo is a writer of the first class,”-rejoined Maidánoff, “and my friend Tonkoshéeff, in his Spanish romance, ‘El Trovador’...”

“Ah, that’s the book with the question-marks turned upside down?”-interrupted Zinaída.

“Yes. That is the accepted custom among the Spaniards. I was about to say that Tonkoshéeff...”

“Come now! You will begin to wrangle again about classicism and romanticism,”-Zinaída interrupted him again.-“Let us rather play...”

“At forfeits?”-put in Lúshin.

“No, forfeits is tiresome; but at comparisons.” (This game had been invented by Zinaída herself; some object was named, and each person tried to compare it with something or other, and the one who matched the thing with the best comparison received a prize.) She went to the window. The sun had just set; long, crimson clouds hung high aloft in the sky.

“What are those clouds like?”-inquired Zinaída and, without waiting for our answers, she said:-“I think that they resemble those crimson sails which were on Cleopatra’s golden ship, when she went to meet Antony. You were telling me about that not long ago, do you remember, Maidánoff?”

All of us, like Polonius in “Hamlet,” decided that the clouds reminded us precisely of those sails, and that none of us could find a better comparison.

“And how old was Antony at that time?”-asked Zinaída.

“He was assuredly still a young man,”-remarked Malévsky.

“Yes, he was young,”-assented Maidánoff confidently.

“Excuse me,”-exclaimed Lúshin,-“he was over forty years of age.”

“Over forty years of age,”-repeated Zinaída, darting a swift glance at him...

I soon went home.-“She is in love,” my lips whispered involuntarily...

“But with whom?”

XII

The days passed by. Zinaída grew more and more strange, more and more incomprehensible. One day I entered her house and found her sitting on a straw-bottomed chair, with her head pressed against the sharp edge of a table. She straightened up... her face was again all bathed in tears.

“Ah! It’s you!”-she said, with a harsh grimace.-“Come hither.”

I went up to her: she laid her hand on my head and, suddenly seizing me by the hair, began to pull it.

“It hurts”... I said at last.

“Ah! It hurts! And doesn’t it hurt me? Doesn’t it hurt me?”-she repeated.

“Ai!”-she suddenly cried, perceiving that she had pulled out a small tuft of my hair.-“What have I done? Poor M’sieu Voldemar!” She carefully straightened out the hairs she had plucked out, wound them round her finger, and twisted them into a ring.

“I will put your hair in my locket and wear it,”-she said, and tears glistened in her eyes.-“Perhaps that will comfort you a little... but now, good-bye.”

I returned home and found an unpleasant state of things there. A scene was in progress between my father and my mother; she was upbraiding him for something or other, while he, according to his wont, was maintaining a cold, polite silence-and speedily went away. I could not hear what my mother was talking about, neither did I care to know: I remember only, that, at the conclusion of the scene, she ordered me to be called to her boudoir, and expressed herself with great dissatisfaction about my frequent visits at the house of the old Princess, who was, according to her assertions, *une femme capable de tout*. I kissed her hand (I always did that when I wanted to put an end to the conversation), and went off to my own room. Zinaída’s tears had completely discomfited me; I positively did not know what to think, and was ready to cry myself: I was still a child, in spite of my sixteen years. I thought no more of Malévsky, although Byelovzóroff became more and more menacing every day, and glared at the shifty Count like a wolf at a sheep; but I was not thinking of anything or of anybody. I lost myself in conjectures and kept seeking isolated spots. I took a special fancy to the ruins of the hothouse. I could clamber up on the high wall, seat myself, and sit there such an unhappy, lonely, and sad youth that I felt sorry for myself-and how delightful

those mournful sensations were, how I gloated over them!...

One day, I was sitting thus on the wall, gazing off into the distance and listening to the chiming of the bells... when suddenly something ran over me-not a breeze exactly, not a shiver, but something resembling a breath, the consciousness of some one's proximity... I dropped my eyes. Below me, in a light grey gown, with a pink parasol on her shoulder, Zinaída was walking hastily along the road. She saw me, halted, and, pushing up the brim of her straw hat, raised her velvety eyes to mine.

"What are you doing there, on such a height?"-she asked me, with a strange sort of smile.-"There now,"-she went on,-"you are always declaring that you love me-jump down to me here on the road if you really do love me."

Before the words were well out of Zinaída's mouth I had flown down, exactly as though some one had given me a push from behind. The wall was about two fathoms high. I landed on the ground with my feet, but the shock was so violent that I could not retain my balance; I fell, and lost consciousness for a moment. When I came to myself I felt, without opening my eyes, that Zinaída was by my side.-"My dear boy,"-she was saying, as she bent over me-and tender anxiety was audible in her voice-"how couldst thou do that, how couldst thou obey?... I love thee... rise."

Her breast was heaving beside me, her hands were touching my head, and suddenly-what were my sensations then!-her soft, fresh lips began to cover my whole face with kisses... they touched my lips... But at this point Zinaída probably divined from the expression of my face that I had already recovered consciousness, although I still did not open my eyes-and swiftly rising to her feet, she said:-"Come, get up, you rogue, you foolish fellow! Why do you lie there in the dust?"-I got up.

"Give me my parasol,"-said Zinaída.-"I have thrown it somewhere; and don't look at me like that what nonsense is this? You are hurt? You have burned yourself with the nettles, I suppose. Don't look at me like that, I tell you... Why, he understands nothing, he doesn't answer me,"-she added, as though speaking to herself... "Go home, M'sieu Voldemar, brush yourself off, and don't dare to follow me-if you do I shall be very angry, and I shall never again..."

She did not finish her speech and walked briskly away, while I sat down by the roadside... my legs would not support me. The nettles had stung my hands, my back ached, and my head was reeling; but the sensation of

beatitude which I then experienced has never since been repeated in my life. It hung like a sweet pain in all my limbs and broke out at last in rapturous leaps and exclamations. As a matter of fact, I was still a child.

XIII

I was so happy and proud all that day; I preserved so vividly on my visage the feeling of Zinaída's kisses; I recalled her every word with such ecstasy; I so cherished my unexpected happiness that I even became frightened; I did not even wish to see her who was the cause of those new sensations. It seemed to me that I could ask nothing more of Fate, that now I must "take and draw a deep breath for the last time, and die." On the other hand, when I set off for the wing next day, I felt a great agitation, which I vainly endeavoured to conceal beneath the discreet facial ease suitable for a man who wishes to let it be understood that he knows how to keep a secret. Zinaída received me very simply, without any emotion, merely shaking her finger at me and asking: Had I any bruises? All my discreet ease of manner and mysteriousness instantly disappeared, and along with them my agitation. Of course I had not expected anything in particular, but Zinaída's composure acted on me like a dash of cold water. I understood that I was a child in her eyes-and my heart waxed very heavy! Zinaída paced to and fro in the room, smiling swiftly every time she glanced at me; but her thoughts were far away, I saw that clearly... "Shall I allude to what happened yesterday myself,"-I thought;- "shall I ask her where she was going in such haste, in order to find out, definitively?"... but I merely waved my hand in despair and sat down in a corner.

Byelovzóroff entered; I was delighted to see him.

"I have not found you a gentle saddle-horse,"-he began in a surly tone;- "Freitag vouches to me for one-but I am not convinced. I am afraid."

"Of what are you afraid, allow me to inquire?" asked Zinaída.

"Of what? Why, you don't know how to ride. God forbid that any accident should happen! And what has put that freak into your head?"

"Come, that's my affair, M'sieu my wild beast. In that case, I will ask Piótr Vasílievitch"... (My father was called Piótr Vasílievitch... I was amazed that she should mention his name so lightly and freely, exactly as though she were convinced of his readiness to serve her.)

"You don't say so!"-retorted Byelovzóroff.- "Is it with him that you wish to ride?"

"With him or some one else,-that makes no difference to you. Only not with you."

“Not with me,”-said Byelovzóroff.-“As you like. What does it matter? I will get you the horse.”

“But see to it that it is not a cow-like beast. I warn you in advance that I mean to gallop.”

“Gallop, if you wish... But is it with Malévsky that you are going to ride?”

“And why shouldn’t I ride with him, warrior? Come, quiet down. I’ll take you too. You know that for me Malévsky is now-fie!”-She shook her head.

“You say that just to console me,”-growled Byelovzóroff.

Zinaída narrowed her eyes.-“Does that console you? oh... oh oh... warrior!”-she said at last, as though unable to find any other word.-“And would you like to ride with us, M’sieu Voldemar?”

“I’m not fond of riding... in a large party,”... I muttered, without raising my eyes.

“You prefer a *tête-à-tête*?... Well, every one to his taste,”-she said, with a sigh.-“But go, Byelovzóroff, make an effort. I want the horse for to-morrow.”

“Yes; but where am I to get the money?”-interposed the old Princess.

Zinaída frowned.

“I am not asking any from you; Byelovzóroff will trust me.”

“He will, he will,” grumbled the old Princess-and suddenly screamed at the top of her voice:-“Dunyáshka!”

“*Maman*, I made you a present of a bell,”-remarked the young Princess.

“Dunyáshka!”-repeated the old woman.

Byelovzóroff bowed himself out; I went out with him. Zinaída did not detain me.

XIV

I rose early the next morning, cut myself a staff, and went off beyond the city barrier. "I'll have a walk and banish my grief,"-I said to myself. It was a beautiful day, brilliant but not too hot; a cheerful, fresh breeze was blowing over the earth and rustling and playing moderately, keeping in constant motion and agitating nothing. For a long time I roamed about on the hills and in the forests. I did not feel happy; I had left home with the intention of surrendering myself to melancholy;-but youth, the fine weather, the fresh air, the diversion of brisk pedestrian exercise, the delight of lying in solitude on the thick grass, produced their effect; the memory of those unforgettable words, of those kisses, again thrust themselves into my soul. It was pleasant to me to think that Zinaída could not, nevertheless, fail to do justice to my decision, to my heroism... "Others are better for her than I,"-I thought:-"so be it! On the other hand, the others only say what they will do, but I have done it! And what else am I capable of doing for her?"-My imagination began to ferment. I began to picture to myself how I would save her from the hands of enemies; how, all bathed in blood, I would wrest her out of prison; how I would die at her feet. I recalled a picture which hung in our drawing-room of Malek-Adel carrying off Matilda-and thereupon became engrossed in the appearance of a big, speckled woodpecker which was busily ascending the slender trunk of a birch-tree, and uneasily peering out from behind it, now on the right, now on the left, like a musician from behind the neck of his bass-viol.

Then I began to sing: "Not the white snows,"-and ran off into the romance which was well known at that period, "I will await thee when the playful breeze"; then I began to recite aloud Ermák's invocation to the stars in Khomyakóff's tragedy; I tried to compose something in a sentimental vein; I even thought out the line wherewith the whole poem was to conclude: "Oh, Zinaída! Zinaída!"-But it came to nothing. Meanwhile, dinner-time was approaching. I descended into the valley; a narrow, sandy path wound through it and led toward the town. I strolled along that path... The dull trampling of horses' hoofs resounded behind me. I glanced round, involuntarily came to a standstill and pulled off my cap. I beheld my father and Zinaída. They were riding side by side. My father was saying something to her, bending his whole body toward her, and resting his hand on the neck

of her horse; he was smiling. Zinaída was listening to him in silence, with her eyes severely downcast and lips compressed. At first I saw only them; it was not until several moments later that Byelovzóroff made his appearance from round a turn in the valley, dressed in hussar uniform with pelisse, and mounted on a foam-flecked black horse. The good steed was tossing his head, snorting and curvetting; the rider was both reining him in and spurring him on. I stepped aside. My father gathered up his reins and moved away from Zinaída; she slowly raised her eyes to his-and both set off at a gallop... Byelovzóroff dashed headlong after them with clanking sword. "He is as red as a crab,"-I thought,-"and she... Why is she so pale? She has been riding the whole morning-and yet she is pale?"

I redoubled my pace and managed to reach home just before dinner. My father was already sitting, re-dressed, well-washed and fresh, beside my mother's arm-chair, and reading aloud to her in his even, sonorous voice, the feuilleton of the *Journal des Débats*; but my mother was listening to him inattentively and, on catching sight of me, inquired where I had been all day, adding, that she did not like to have me prowling about God only knew where and God only knew with whom. "But I have been walking alone,"-I was on the point of replying; but I glanced at my father and for some reason or other held my peace.

XV

During the course of the next five or six days I hardly saw Zinaída; she gave it out that she was ill, which did not, however, prevent the habitual visitors from presenting themselves at the wing-"to take their turn in attendance,"-as they expressed it;-all except Maidánoff, who immediately became dispirited as soon as he had no opportunity to go into raptures. Byelovzóroff sat morosely in a corner, all tightly buttoned up and red in the face; on Count Malévsky's delicate visage hovered constantly a sort of evil smile; he really had fallen into disfavour with Zinaída and listened with particular pains to the old Princess, and drove with her to the Governor-General's in a hired carriage. But this trip proved unsuccessful and even resulted in an unpleasantness for Malévsky: he was reminded of some row with certain Putéisk officers, and was compelled, in self-justification, to say that he was inexperienced at the time. Lúshin came twice a day, but did not remain long. I was somewhat afraid of him after our last explanation and, at the same time, I felt a sincere attachment for him. One day he went for a stroll with me in the Neskútchny Park, was very good-natured and amiable, imparted to me the names and properties of various plants and flowers, and suddenly exclaimed-without rhyme or reason, as the saying is-as he smote himself on the brow: "And I, like a fool, thought she was a coquette! Evidently, it is sweet to sacrifice one's self-for some people!"

"What do you mean to say by that?"-I asked.

"I don't mean to say anything to you,"-returned Lúshin, abruptly.

Zinaída avoided me; my appearance-I could not but perceive the fact-produced an unpleasant impression on her. She involuntarily turned away from me... involuntarily; that was what was bitter, that was what broke my heart! But there was no help for it and I tried to keep out of her sight and only stand guard over her from a distance, in which I was not always successful. As before, something incomprehensible was taking place with her; her face had become different-she was altogether a different person. I was particularly struck by the change which had taken place in her on a certain warm, tranquil evening. I was sitting on a low bench under a wide-spreading elder-bush; I loved that little nook; the window of Zinaída's chamber was visible thence. I was sitting there; over my head, in the darkened foliage, a tiny bird was rummaging fussily about; a great cat with outstretched back had stolen into

the garden, and the first beetles were booming heavily in the air, which was still transparent although no longer light. I sat there and stared at the window, and waited to see whether some one would not open it: and, in fact, it did open, and Zinaída made her appearance in it. She wore a white gown, and she herself-her face, her shoulders and her hands-was pale to whiteness. She remained for a long time motionless, and for a long time stared, without moving, straight in front of her from beneath her contracted brows. I did not recognise that look in her. Then she clasped her hands very, very tightly, raised them to her lips, to her forehead-and suddenly, unlocking her fingers, pushed her hair away from her ears, shook it back and, throwing her head downward from above with a certain decisiveness, she shut the window with a bang.

Two days later she met me in the park. I tried to step aside, but she stopped me.

“Give me your hand”-she said to me, with her former affection.-“It is a long time since you and I have had a chat.”

I looked at her; her eyes were beaming softly and her face was smiling, as though athwart a mist.

“Are you still ailing?”-I asked her.

“No, everything has passed off now,”-she replied, breaking off a small, red rose.-“I am a little tired, but that will pass off also.”

“And will you be once more the same as you used to be?”-I queried.

Zinaída raised the rose to her face, and it seemed to me as though the reflection of the brilliant petals fell upon her cheeks.-“Have I changed?”-she asked me.

“Yes, you have changed,”-I replied in a low voice.

“I was cold toward you,-I know that,”-began Zinaída;-“but you must not pay any heed to that... I could not do otherwise... Come, what’s the use of talking about that?”

“You do not want me to love you-that’s what!” I exclaimed gloomily, with involuntary impetuosity.

“Yes, love me, but not as before.”

“How then?”

“Let us be friends,-that is how!”-Zinaída allowed me to smell of the rose.-“Listen; I am much older than you, you know-I might be your aunt, really; well, if not your aunt, then your elder sister. While you...”

“I am a child to you,”-I interrupted her.

“Well, yes, you are a child, but a dear, good, clever child, of whom I am very fond. Do you know what? I will appoint you to the post of my page from this day forth; and you are not to forget that pages must not be separated from their mistress. Here is a token of your new dignity for you,”-she added, sticking the rose into the button-hole of my round-jacket; “a token of our favour toward you.”

“I have received many favours from you in the past,”-I murmured.

“Ah!”-said Zinaída, and darting a sidelong glance at me.-“What a memory you have! Well? And I am ready now also...”

And bending toward me, she imprinted on my brow a pure, calm kiss.

I only stared at her-but she turned away and, saying,-“Follow me, my page,”-walked to the wing. I followed her-and was in a constant state of bewilderment.-“Is it possible,”-I thought,-“that this gentle, sensible young girl is that same Zinaída whom I used to know?”-And her very walk seemed to me more quiet, her whole figure more majestic, more graceful...

And, my God! with what fresh violence did love flame up within me!

XVI

After dinner the visitors were assembled again in the wing, and the young Princess came out to them. The whole company was present, in full force, as on that first evening, never to be forgotten by me: even Nirmátzky had dragged himself thither. Maidánoff had arrived earlier than all the rest; he had brought some new verses. The game of forfeits began again, but this time without the strange sallies, without pranks and uproar; the gipsy element had vanished. Zinaída gave a new mood to our gathering. I sat beside her, as a page should. Among other things, she proposed that the one whose forfeit was drawn should narrate his dream; but this was not a success. The dreams turned out to be either uninteresting (Byelovzóroff had dreamed that he had fed his horse on carp, and that it had a wooden head), or unnatural, fictitious. Maidánoff regaled us with a complete novel; there were sepulchres and angels with harps, and burning lights and sounds wafted from afar. Zinaída did not allow him to finish. "If it is a question of invention,"-said she,-"then let each one relate something which is positively made up."-Byelovzóroff had to speak first.

The young hussar became confused.-"I cannot invent anything!"-he exclaimed.

"What nonsense!"-interposed Zinaída.-"Come, imagine, for instance, that you are married, and tell us how you would pass the time with your wife. Would you lock her up?"

"I would."

"And would you sit with her yourself?"

"I certainly would sit with her myself."

"Very good. Well, and what if that bored her, and she betrayed you?"

"I would kill her."

"Just so. Well, now supposing that I were your wife, what would you do then?"

Byelovzóroff made no answer for a while.-"I would kill myself..."

Zinaída burst out laughing.-"I see that there's not much to be got out of you."

The second forfeit fell to Zinaída's share. She raised her eyes to the ceiling and meditated.-"See here,"-she began at last,-"this is what I have devised... Imagine to yourselves a magnificent palace, a summer night, and a

marvellous ball. This ball is given by the young Queen. Everywhere there are gold, marble, silk, lights, diamonds, flowers, the smoke of incense-all the whims of luxury.”

“Do you love luxury?”-interrupted Lúshin.

“Luxury is beautiful,”-she returned;-“I love everything that is beautiful.”

“More than what is fine?”-he asked.

“That is difficult; somehow I don’t understand. Don’t bother me. So then, there is a magnificent ball. There are many guests, they are all young, very handsome, brave; all are desperately in love with the Queen.”

“Are there no women among the guests?”-inquired Malévsky.

“No-or stay-yes, there are.”

“Also very handsome?”

“Charming. But the men are all in love with the Queen. She is tall and slender; she wears a small gold diadem on her black hair.”

I looked at Zinaída-and at that moment she seemed so far above us, her white forehead and her impassive eyebrows exhaled so much clear intelligence and such sovereignty, that I said to myself: “Thou thyself art that Queen!”

“All throng around her,”-pursued Zinaída;-“all lavish the most flattering speeches on her.”

“And is she fond of flattery?”-asked Lúshin.

“How intolerable! He is continually interrupting... Who does not like flattery?”

“One more final question,”-remarked Malévsky:-“Has the Queen a husband?”

“I have not thought about that. No, why should she have a husband?”

“Of course,”-assented Malévsky;-“why should she have a husband?”

“Silence!”-exclaimed, in English, Maidánoff, who spoke French badly.

“*Merci*,”-said Zinaída to him.-“So then, the Queen listens to those speeches, listens to the music, but does not look at a single one of the guests. Six windows are open from top to bottom, from ceiling to floor, and behind them are the dark sky with great stars and the dark garden with huge trees. The Queen gazes into the garden. There, near the trees is a fountain: it gleams white athwart the gloom-long, as long as a spectre. The Queen hears the quiet plashing of its waters in the midst of the conversation and the music. She gazes and thinks: ‘All of you gentlemen are noble, clever, wealthy; you are all ready to die at my feet, I rule over you;... but yonder, by the side of the

fountain, by the side of that plashing water, there is standing and waiting for me the man whom I love, who rules over me. He wears no rich garments, nor precious jewels; no one knows him; but he is waiting for me, and is convinced that I shall come-and I shall come, and there is no power in existence which can stop me when I wish to go to him and remain with him and lose myself with him yonder, in the gloom of the park, beneath the rustling of the trees, beneath the plashing of the fountain..."

Zinaída ceased speaking.

"Is that an invention?"-asked Malévsky slyly.

Zinaída did not even glance at him.

"But what should we do, gentlemen,"-suddenly spoke up Lúshin,-"if we were among the guests and knew about that lucky man by the fountain?"

"Stay, stay,"-interposed Zinaída:-"I myself will tell you what each one of you would do. You, Byelovzóroff, would challenge him to a duel; you, Maidánoff, would write an epigram on him... But no-you do not know how to write epigrams; you would compose a long iambic poem on him, after the style of Barbier, and would insert your production in the *Telegraph*. You, Nirmátsky, would borrow from him... no, you would lend him money on interest; you, doctor..." She paused... "I really do not know about you,-what you would do."

"In my capacity of Court-physician," replied Lúshin, "I would advise the Queen not to give balls when she did not feel in the mood for guests..."

"Perhaps you would be in the right. And you, Count?"

"And I?"-repeated Malévsky, with an evil smile.

"And you would offer him some poisoned sugar-plums."

Malévsky's face writhed a little and assumed for a moment a Jewish expression; but he immediately burst into a guffaw.

"As for you, M'sieu Voldemar..." went on Zinaída,-"but enough of this; let us play at some other game."

"M'sieu Voldemar, in his capacity of page to the Queen, would hold up her train when she ran off into the park,"-remarked Malévsky viciously.

I flared up, but Zinaída swiftly laid her hand on my shoulder and rising, said in a slightly tremulous voice:-"I have never given Your Radiance the right to be insolent, and therefore I beg that you will withdraw."-She pointed him to the door.

"Have mercy, Princess,"-mumbled Malévsky, turning pale all over.

"The Princess is right,"-exclaimed Byelovzóroff, rising to his feet also.

“By God! I never in the least expected this,”-went on Malévsky:-“I think there was nothing in my words which... I had no intention of offending you... Forgive me.”

Zinaída surveyed him with a cold glance, and smiled coldly.-“Remain, if you like,”-she said, with a careless wave of her hand.-“M’sieu Voldemar and I have taken offence without cause. You find it merry to jest... I wish you well.”

“Forgive me,”-repeated Malévsky once more; and I, recalling Zinaída’s movement, thought again that a real queen could not have ordered an insolent man out of the room with more majesty.

The game of forfeits did not continue long after this little scene; all felt somewhat awkward, not so much in consequence of the scene itself as from another, not entirely defined, but oppressive sensation. No one alluded to it, but each one was conscious of its existence within himself and in his neighbour. Maidánoff recited to us all his poems-and Malévsky lauded them with exaggerated warmth.

“How hard he is trying to appear amiable now,”-Lúshin whispered to me.

We soon dispersed. Zinaída had suddenly grown pensive; the old Princess sent word that she had a headache; Nirmátsky began to complain of his rheumatism...

For a long time I could not get to sleep; Zinaída’s narrative had impressed me.-“Is it possible that it contains a hint?”-I asked myself:-“and at whom was she hinting? And if there really is some one to hint about... what must I decide to do? No, no, it cannot be,”-I whispered, turning over from one burning cheek to the other... But I called to mind the expression of Zinaída’s face during her narration... I called to mind the exclamation which had broken from Lúshin in the Neskútchny Park, the sudden changes in her treatment of me-and lost myself in conjectures. “Who is he?” Those three words seemed to stand in front of my eyes, outlined in the darkness; a low-lying, ominous cloud seemed to be hanging over me-and I felt its pressure-and waited every moment for it to burst. I had grown used to many things of late; I had seen many things at the Zasyékins’; their disorderliness, tallow candle-ends, broken knives and forks, gloomy Vonifáty, the shabby maids, the manners of the old Princess herself,-all that strange life no longer surprised me... But to that which I now dimly felt in Zinaída I could not get used... “An adventuress,”-my mother had one day said concerning her. An adventuress-she, my idol, my divinity! That appellation seared me; I tried to

escape from it by burrowing into my pillow; I raged-and at the same time, to what would not I have agreed, what would not I have given, if only I might be that happy mortal by the fountain!...

My blood grew hot and seethed within me. "A garden... a fountain,"... I thought... "I will go into the garden." I dressed myself quickly and slipped out of the house. The night was dark, the trees were barely whispering; a quiet chill was descending from the sky, an odour of fennel was wafted from the vegetable-garden. I made the round of all the alleys; the light sound of my footsteps both disconcerted me and gave me courage; I halted, waiting and listening to hear how my heart was beating quickly and violently. At last I approached the fence and leaned against a slender post. All at once-or was it only my imagination?-a woman's figure flitted past a few paces distant from me... I strained my eyes intently on the darkness; I held my breath. What was this? Was it footsteps that I heard or was it the thumping of my heart again? -"Who is here?"-I stammered in barely audible tones. What was that again? A suppressed laugh?... or a rustling in the leaves?... or a sigh close to my very ear? I was terrified... "Who is here?"-I repeated, in a still lower voice.

The breeze began to flutter for a moment; a fiery band flashed across the sky; a star shot down.-"Is it Zinaída?"-I tried to ask, but the sound died on my lips. And suddenly everything became profoundly silent all around, as often happens in the middle of the night... Even the katydids ceased to shrill in the trees; only a window rattled somewhere. I stood and stood, then returned to my chamber, to my cold bed. I felt a strange agitation-exactly as though I had gone to a tryst, and had remained alone, and had passed by some one else's happiness.

XVII

The next day I caught only a glimpse of Zinaída; she drove away somewhere with the old Princess in a hired carriage. On the other hand, I saw Lúshin-who, however, barely deigned to bestow a greeting on me-and Malévsky. The young Count grinned and entered into conversation with me in friendly wise. Among all the visitors to the wing he alone had managed to effect an entrance to our house, and my mother had taken a fancy to him. My father did not favour him and treated him politely to the point of insult.

“Ah, *monsieur le page*,”-began Malévsky,-“I am very glad to meet you. What is your beauteous queen doing?”

His fresh, handsome face was so repulsive to me at that moment, and he looked at me with such a scornfully-playful stare, that I made him no answer whatsoever.

“Are you still in a bad humour?”-he went on.-“There is no occasion for it. It was not I, you know, who called you a page; and pages are chiefly with queens. But permit me to observe to you that you are fulfilling your duties badly.”

“How so?”

“Pages ought to be inseparable from their sovereigns; pages ought to know everything that they do; they ought even to watch over them,”-he added, lowering his voice,-“day and night.”

“What do you mean by that?”

“What do I mean? I think I have expressed myself plainly. Day-and night. It does not matter so much about the day; by day it is light and there are people about; but by night-that’s exactly the time to expect a catastrophe. I advise you not to sleep o’ nights and to watch, watch with all your might. Remember-in a garden, by night, near the fountain-that’s where you must keep guard. You will thank me for this.”

Malévsky laughed and turned his back on me. He did not, in all probability, attribute any special importance to what he had said to me; he bore the reputation of being a capital hand at mystification, and was renowned for his cleverness in fooling people at the masquerades, in which that almost unconscious disposition to lie, wherewith his whole being was permeated, greatly aided him... He had merely wished to tease me; but every word of his trickled like poison through all my veins.-The blood flew to my

head.

“Ah! so that’s it!”-I said to myself:-“good! So it was not for nothing that I felt drawn to the garden! That shall not be!” I exclaimed, smiting myself on the breast with my fist; although I really did not know what it was that I was determined not to permit.-“Whether Malévsky himself comes into the garden,”-I thought (perhaps he had blurted out a secret; he was insolent enough for that),-“or some one else,”-(the fence of our vegetable-garden was very low and it cost no effort to climb over it)-“at any rate, it will be all the worse for the person whom I catch! I would not advise any one to encounter me! I’ll show the whole world and her, the traitress,”-(I actually called her a traitress)-“that I know how to avenge myself!”

I returned to my own room, took out of my writing-table a recently purchased English knife, felt of the sharp blade, and, knitting my brows, thrust it into my pocket with a cold and concentrated decision, exactly as though it was nothing remarkable for me to do such deeds, and this was not the first occasion. My heart swelled angrily within me and grew stony; I did not unbend my brows until nightfall and did not relax my lips, and kept striding back and forth, clutching the knife which had grown warm in my pocket, and preparing myself in advance for something terrible. These new, unprecedented emotions so engrossed and even cheered me, that I thought very little about Zinaída herself. There kept constantly flitting through my head Aleko, the young gipsy:[6]-“Where art thou going, handsome youth?-Lie down...” and then: “Thou’rt all with blood bespattered!... Oh, what is’t that thou hast done?... Nothing!” With what a harsh smile I repeated that: that “Nothing!”

My father was not at home; but my mother, who for some time past had been in a state of almost constant, dull irritation, noticed my baleful aspect at supper, and said to me:-“What art thou sulking at, like a mouse at groats?”-I merely smiled patronisingly at her by way of reply and thought to myself: “If they only knew!”-The clock struck eleven; I went to my own room but did not undress; I was waiting for midnight; at last it struck.-“’Tis time!”-I hissed between my teeth, and buttoning my coat to the throat and even turning up my sleeves I betook myself to the garden.

I had selected a place beforehand where I meant to stand on guard. At the end of the garden, at the spot where the fence, which separated our property from the Zasyékins’, abutted on the party-wall, grew a solitary spruce-tree. Standing beneath its low, thick branches, I could see well, as far as the

nocturnal gloom permitted, all that went on around; there also meandered a path which always seemed to me mysterious; like a serpent it wound under the fence, which at that point bore traces of clambering feet, and led to an arbour of dense acacias. I reached the spruce-tree, leaned against its trunk and began my watch.

The night was as tranquil as the preceding one had been; but there were fewer storm-clouds in the sky, and the outlines of the bushes, even of the tall flowers, were more plainly discernible. The first moments of waiting were wearisome, almost terrible. I had made up my mind to everything; I was merely considering how I ought to act. Ought I to thunder out: "Who goes there? Halt! Confess-or die!"-or simply smite... Every sound, every noise and rustling seemed to me significant, unusual... I made ready... I bent forward... But half an hour, an hour, elapsed; my blood quieted down and turned cold; the consciousness that I was doing all this in vain, that I was even somewhat ridiculous, that Malévsky had been making fun of me, began to steal into my soul. I abandoned my ambush and made the round of the entire garden. As though expressly, not the slightest sound was to be heard anywhere; everything was at rest; even our dog was asleep, curled up in a ball at the gate. I climbed up on the ruin of the hothouse, beheld before me the distant plain, recalled my meeting with Zinaída, and became immersed in meditation...

I started... I thought I heard the creak of an opening door, then the light crackling of a broken twig. In two bounds I had descended from the ruin-and stood petrified on the spot. Swift, light but cautious footsteps were plainly audible in the garden. They were coming toward me. "Here he is... Here he is, at last!"-darted through my heart. I convulsively jerked the knife out of my pocket, convulsively opened it-red sparks whirled before my eyes, the hair stood up on my head with fright and wrath... The steps were coming straight toward me-I bent over, and went to meet them... A man made his appearance... My God! It was my father!

I recognised him instantly, although he was all enveloped in a dark cloak,-and had pulled his hat down over his face. He went past me on tiptoe. He did not notice me although nothing concealed me; but I had so contracted myself and shrunk together that I think I must have been on a level with the ground. The jealous Othello, prepared to murder, had suddenly been converted into the school-boy... I was so frightened by the unexpected apparition of my father that I did not even take note, at first, in what direction

he was going and where he had disappeared. I merely straightened up at the moment and thought: "Why is my father walking in the garden by night?"-when everything around had relapsed into silence. In my alarm I had dropped my knife in the grass, but I did not even try to find it; I felt very much ashamed. I became sobered on the instant. But as I wended my way home, I stepped up to my little bench under the elder-bush and cast a glance at the little window of Zinaída's chamber. The small, somewhat curved panes of the little window gleamed dully blue in the faint light which fell from the night sky. Suddenly their colour began to undergo a change... Behind them-I saw it, saw it clearly,-a whitish shade was lowered, descended to the sill,-and there remained motionless.

"What is the meaning of that?"-I said aloud, almost involuntarily, when I again found myself in my own room.-"Was it a dream, an accident, or..." The surmises which suddenly came into my head were so new and strange that I dared not even yield to them.

XVIII

I rose in the morning with a headache. My agitation of the night before had vanished. It had been replaced by an oppressive perplexity and a certain, hitherto unknown sadness,-exactly as though something had died in me.

“What makes you look like a rabbit which has had half of its brain removed?”-said Lúshin, who happened to meet me. At breakfast I kept casting covert glances now at my father, now at my mother; he was calm, as usual; she, as usual, was secretly irritated. I waited to see whether my father would address me in a friendly way, as he sometimes did... But he did not even caress me with his cold, everyday affection.-“Shall I tell Zinaída all?”-I thought... “For it makes no difference now-everything is over between us.” I went to her, but I not only did not tell her anything,-I did not even get a chance to talk to her as I would have liked. The old Princess’s son, a cadet aged twelve, had come from Petersburg to spend his vacation with her; Zinaída immediately confided her brother to me.-“Here, my dear Volódya,”-said she (she called me so for the first time), “is a comrade for you. His name is Volódya also. Pray, like him; he’s a wild little fellow still, but he has a good heart. Show him Neskútchny Park, walk with him, take him under your protection. You will do that, will you not? You, too, are such a good fellow!”-She laid both hands affectionately on my shoulder-and I was reduced to utter confusion. The arrival of that boy turned me into a boy. I stared in silence at the cadet, who riveted his eyes in corresponding silence on me. Zinaída burst out laughing and pushed us toward each other.-“Come, embrace, children!”-We embraced.-“I’ll take you into the garden if you wish,-shall I?”-I asked the cadet.

“Certainly, sir,”-he replied, in a hoarse, genuine cadet voice. Again Zinaída indulged in a burst of laughter... I managed to notice that never before had she had such charming colour in her face. The cadet and I went off together. In our garden stood an old swing. I seated him on the thin little board and began to swing him. He sat motionless in his new little uniform of thick cloth with broad gold galloon, and clung tightly to the ropes.

“You had better unhook your collar,”-I said to him.

“Never mind, sir,[7] we are used to it, sir,”-he said, and cleared his throat.

He resembled his sister; his eyes were particularly suggestive of her. It was pleasant to me to be of service to him; and, at the same time, that aching

pain kept quietly gnawing at my heart. “Now I really am a child,” I thought; “but last night...” I remembered where I had dropped my knife and found it. The cadet asked me to lend it to him, plucked a thick stalk of lovage, cut a whistle from it, and began to pipe. Othello piped also.

But in the evening, on the other hand, how he did weep, that same Othello, over Zinaída’s hands when, having sought him out in a corner of the garden, she asked him what made him so melancholy. My tears streamed with such violence that she was frightened.-“What is the matter with you? What is the matter with you, Volódya?”-she kept repeating, and seeing that I made her no reply, she took it into her head to kiss my wet cheek. But I turned away from her and whispered through my sobs:-“I know everything: why have you trifled with me?... Why did you want my love?”

“I am to blame toward you, Volódya”... said Zinaída.-“Akh, I am very much to blame”... she said, and clenched her hands.-“How much evil, dark, sinful, there is in me!... But I am not trifling with you now, I love you-you do not suspect why and how... But what is it you know?”

What could I say to her? She stood before me and gazed at me-and I belonged to her wholly, from head to foot, as soon as she looked at me... A quarter of an hour later I was running a race with the cadet and Zinaída; I was not weeping; I was laughing, although my swollen eyelids dropped tears from laughing; on my neck, in place of a tie, was bound a ribbon of Zinaída’s, and I shouted with joy when I succeeded in seizing her round the waist. She did with me whatsoever she would.

XIX

I should be hard put to it, if I were made to narrate in detail all that went on within me in the course of the week which followed my unsuccessful nocturnal expedition. It was a strange, feverish time, a sort of chaos in which the most opposite emotions, thoughts, suspicions, hopes, joys, and sufferings revolved in a whirlwind; I was afraid to look into myself, if a sixteen-year-old can look into himself; I was afraid to account to myself for anything whatsoever; I simply made haste to live through the day until the evening; on the other hand, at night I slept... childish giddiness helped me. I did not want to know whether I was beloved, and would not admit to myself that I was not beloved; I shunned my father-but could not shun Zinaída... I burned as with fire in her presence,... but what was the use of my knowing what sort of fire it was wherewith I burned and melted-seeing that it was sweet to me to burn and melt! I surrendered myself entirely to my impressions, and dealt artfully with myself, turned away from my memories and shut my eyes to that of which I had a presentiment in the future... This anguish probably would not have continued long... a thunder-clap put an instantaneous end to everything and hurled me into a new course.

On returning home one day to dinner from a rather long walk, I learned with surprise that I was to dine alone; that my father had gone away, while my mother was ill, did not wish to dine and had shut herself up in her bedroom. From the footmen's faces I divined that something unusual had taken place... I dared not interrogate them, but I had a friend, the young butler Philípp, who was passionately fond of poetry and an artist on the guitar; I applied to him. From him I learned that a frightful scene had taken place between my father and mother (for in the maids' room everything was audible, to the last word; a great deal had been said in French, but the maid Másha had lived for five years with a dressmaker from Paris and understood it all); that my mother had accused my father of infidelity, of being intimate with the young lady our neighbour; that my father had first defended himself, then had flared up and in his turn had made some harsh remark "seemingly about her age," which had set my mother to crying; that my mother had also referred to a note of hand, which appeared to have been given to the old Princess, and expressed herself very vilely about her, and about the young lady as well; and that then my father had threatened her.-"And the whole

trouble arose,”-pursued Philípp, “out of an anonymous letter; but who wrote it no one knows; otherwise there was no reason why this affair should have come out.”

“But has there been anything?”-I enunciated with difficulty, while my hands and feet turned cold, and something began to quiver in the very depths of my breast.

Philípp winked significantly.-“There has. You can’t conceal such doings, cautious as your papa has been in this case;-still, what possessed him, for example, to hire a carriage, or to... for you can’t get along without people there also.”

I dismissed Philípp, and flung myself down on my bed. I did not sob, I did not give myself up to despair; I did not ask myself when and how all this had taken place; I was not surprised that I had not guessed it sooner, long before-I did not even murmur against my father... That which I had learned was beyond my strength; this sudden discovery had crushed me... All was over. All my flowers had been plucked up at one blow and lay strewn around me, scattered and trampled under foot.

XX

On the following day my mother announced that she was going to remove to town. My father went into her bedroom in the morning and sat there a long time alone with her. No one heard what he said to her, but my mother did not weep any more; she calmed down and asked for something to eat, but did not show herself and did not alter her intention. I remember that I wandered about all day long, but did not go into the garden and did not glance even once at the wing-and in the evening I was the witness of an amazing occurrence; my father took Count Malévsky by the arm and led him out of the hall into the anteroom and, in the presence of a lackey, said coldly to him: "Several days ago Your Radiance was shown the door in a certain house. I shall not enter into explanations with you now, but I have the honour to inform you that if you come to my house again I shall fling you through the window. I don't like your handwriting." The Count bowed, set his teeth, shrank together, and disappeared.

Preparations began for removing to town, on the Arbát,[8] where our house was situated. Probably my father himself no longer cared to remain in the villa; but it was evident that he had succeeded in persuading my mother not to make a row. Everything was done quietly, without haste; my mother even sent her compliments to the old Princess and expressed her regret that, owing to ill-health, she would be unable to see her before her departure. I prowled about like a crazy person, and desired but one thing,-that everything might come to an end as speedily as possible. One thought never quitted my head: how could she, a young girl,-well, and a princess into the bargain,-bring herself to such a step, knowing that my father was not a free man while she had the possibility of marrying Byelovzóroff at least, for example? What had she hoped for? How was it that she had not been afraid to ruin her whole future?-"Yes,"-I thought,-"that's what love is,-that is passion,-that is devotion,"... and I recalled Lúshin's words to me: "Self-sacrifice is sweet-for some people." Once I happened to catch sight of a white spot in one of the windows of the wing... "Can that be Zinaída's face?"-I thought;... and it really was her face. I could not hold out. I could not part from her without bidding her a last farewell. I seized a convenient moment and betook myself to the wing.

In the drawing-room the old Princess received me with her customary,

slovenly-careless greeting.

“What has made your folks uneasy so early, my dear fellow?”-she said, stuffing snuff up both her nostrils. I looked at her, and a weight was removed from my heart. The word “note of hand” uttered by Philípp tormented me. She suspected nothing... so it seemed to me then, at least. Zinaída made her appearance from the adjoining room in a black gown, pale, with hair out of curl; she silently took me by the hand and led me away to her room.

“I heard your voice,”-she began,-“and came out at once. And did you find it so easy to desert us, naughty boy?”

“I have come to take leave of you, Princess,”-I replied,-“probably forever. You may have heard we are going away.”

Zinaída gazed intently at me.

“Yes, I have heard. Thank you for coming. I was beginning to think that I should not see you.-Think kindly of me. I have sometimes tormented you; but nevertheless I am not the sort of person you think I am.”

She turned away and leaned against the window-casing.

“Really, I am not that sort of person. I know that you have a bad opinion of me.”

“I?”

“Yes, you... you.”

“I?”-I repeated sorrowfully, and my heart began to quiver as of old, beneath the influence of the irresistible, inexpressible witchery.-“I? Believe me, Zinaída Alexándrovna, whatever you may have done, however you may have tormented me, I shall love and adore you until the end of my life.”

She turned swiftly toward me and opening her arms widely, she clasped my head, and kissed me heartily and warmly. God knows whom that long, farewell kiss was seeking, but I eagerly tasted its sweetness. I knew that it would never more be repeated.-“Farewell, farewell!” I kept saying...

She wrenched herself away and left the room. And I withdrew also. I am unable to describe the feeling with which I retired. I should not wish ever to have it repeated; but I should consider myself unhappy if I had never experienced it.

We removed to town. I did not speedily detach myself from the past, I did not speedily take up my work. My wound healed slowly; but I really had no evil feeling toward my father. On the contrary, he seemed to have gained in stature in my eyes... let the psychologists explain this contradiction as best they may. One day I was walking along the boulevard when, to my

indescribable joy, I encountered Lúshin. I liked him for his straightforward, sincere character; and, moreover, he was dear to me in virtue of the memories which he awakened in me. I rushed at him.

“Aha!”-he said, with a scowl.-“Is it you, young man? Come, let me have a look at you. You are still all sallow, and yet there is not the olden trash in your eyes. You look like a man, not like a lap-dog. That’s good. Well, and how are you? Are you working?”

I heaved a sigh. I did not wish to lie, and I was ashamed to tell the truth.

“Well, never mind,”-went on Lúshin,-“don’t be afraid. The principal thing is to live in normal fashion and not to yield to impulses. Otherwise, where’s the good? No matter whither the wave bears one-’tis bad; let a man stand on a stone if need be, but on his own feet. Here I am croaking... but Byelovzóroff-have you heard about him?”

“What about him? No.”

“He has disappeared without leaving a trace; they say he has gone to the Caucasus. A lesson to you, young man. And the whole thing arises from not knowing how to say good-bye,-to break bonds in time. You, now, seem to have jumped out successfully. Look out, don’t fall in again. Farewell.”

“I shall not fall in,”-I thought... “I shall see her no more.” But I was fated to see Zinaída once more.

XXI

My father was in the habit of riding on horseback every day; he had a splendid red-roan English horse, with a long, slender neck and long legs, indefatigable and vicious. Its name was Electric. No one could ride it except my father. One day he came to me in a kindly frame of mind, which had not happened with him for a long time: he was preparing to ride, and had donned his spurs. I began to entreat him to take me with him.

“Let us, rather, play at leap-frog,”-replied my father,-“for thou wilt not be able to keep up with me on thy cob.”

“Yes, I shall; I will put on spurs also.”

“Well, come along.”

We set out. I had a shaggy, black little horse, strong on its feet and fairly spirited; it had to gallop with all its might, it is true, when Electric was going at a full trot; but nevertheless I did not fall behind. I have never seen such a horseman as my father. His seat was so fine and so carelessly-adroit that the horse under him seemed to be conscious of it and to take pride in it. We rode the whole length of all the boulevards, reached the Maidens' Field,[9] leaped over several enclosures (at first I was afraid to leap, but my father despised timid people, and I ceased to be afraid), crossed the Moscow river twice;-and I was beginning to think that we were on our way homeward, the more so as my father remarked that my horse was tired, when suddenly he turned away from me in the direction of the Crimean Ford, and galloped along the shore.-I dashed after him. When he came on a level with a lofty pile of old beams which lay heaped together, he sprang nimbly from Electric, ordered me to alight and, handing me the bridle of his horse, told me to wait for him on that spot, near the beams; then he turned into a narrow alley and disappeared. I began to pace back and forth along the shore, leading the horses after me and scolding Electric, who as he walked kept incessantly twitching his head, shaking himself, snorting and neighing; when I stood still, he alternately pawed the earth with his hoof, and squealed and bit my cob on the neck; in a word, behaved like a spoiled darling, *pur sang*. My father did not return. A disagreeable humidity was wafted from the river; a fine rain set in and mottled the stupid, grey beams, around which I was hovering and of which I was so heartily tired, with tiny, dark spots. Anxiety took possession of me, but still my father did not come. A Finnish sentry, also all grey, with a huge,

old-fashioned shako, in the form of a pot, on his head, and armed with a halberd (why should there be a sentry, I thought, on the shores of the Moscow river?), approached me, and turning his elderly, wrinkled face to me, he said:

“What are you doing here with those horses, my little gentleman? Hand them over to me; I’ll hold them.”

I did not answer him; he asked me for some tobacco. In order to rid myself of him (moreover, I was tortured by impatience), I advanced a few paces in the direction in which my father had retreated; then I walked through the alley to the very end, turned a corner, and came to a standstill. On the street, forty paces distant from me, in front of the open window of a small wooden house, with his back to me, stood my father; he was leaning his breast on the window-sill, while in the house, half concealed by the curtain, sat a woman in a dark gown talking with my father: the woman was Zinaída.

I stood rooted to the spot in amazement. I must confess that I had in nowise expected this. My first impulse was to flee. “My father will glance round,” I thought, “and then I am lost.”... But a strange feeling—a feeling more powerful than curiosity, more powerful even than jealousy, more powerful than fear,—stopped me. I began to stare, I tried to hear. My father appeared to be insisting upon something. Zinaída would not consent. I seem to see her face now—sad, serious, beautiful, and with an indescribable imprint of adoration, grief, love, and a sort of despair. She uttered monosyllabic words, did not raise her eyes, and only smiled—submissively and obstinately. From that smile alone I recognised my former Zinaída. My father shrugged his shoulders, and set his hat straight on his head—which was always a sign of impatience with him... Then the words became audible: “*Vous devez vous séparer de cette.*”... Zinaída drew herself up and stretched out her hand... Suddenly, before my very eyes, an incredible thing came to pass:—all at once, my father raised the riding-whip, with which he had been lashing the dust from his coat-tails,—and the sound of a sharp blow on that arm, which was bare to the elbow, rang out. I could hardly keep from shrieking, but Zinaída started, gazed in silence at my father, and slowly raising her arm to her lips, kissed the mark which glowed scarlet upon it.

My father hurled his riding-whip from him, and running hastily up the steps of the porch, burst into the house... Zinaída turned round, and stretching out her arms, and throwing back her head, she also quitted the window.

My heart swooning with terror, and with a sort of alarmed perplexity, I darted backward; and dashing through the alley, and almost letting go of Electric, I returned to the bank of the river... I could understand nothing. I knew that my cold and self-contained father was sometimes seized by fits of wild fury; and yet I could not in the least comprehend what I had seen... But I immediately felt that no matter how long I might live, it would be impossible for me ever to forget that movement, Zinaída's glance and smile; that her image, that new image which had suddenly been presented to me, had forever imprinted itself on my memory. I stared stupidly at the river and did not notice that my tears were flowing. "She is being beaten,"-I thought... "She is being beaten... beaten..."

"Come, what ails thee?-Give me my horse!"-rang out my father's voice behind me.

I mechanically gave him the bridle. He sprang upon Electric... the half-frozen horse reared on his hind legs and leaped forward half a fathom... but my father speedily got him under control; he dug his spurs into his flanks and beat him on the neck with his fist... "Ekh, I have no whip,"-he muttered.

I remembered the recent swish through the air and the blow of that same whip, and shuddered.

"What hast thou done with it?"-I asked my father, after waiting a little.

My father did not answer me and galloped on. I dashed after him. I was determined to get a look at his face.

"Didst thou get bored in my absence?"-he said through his teeth.

"A little. But where didst thou drop thy whip?"-I asked him again.

My father shot a swift glance at me.-"I did not drop it,"-he said,-"I threw it away."-He reflected for a space and dropped his head... and then, for the first and probably for the last time, I saw how much tenderness and compunction his stern features were capable of expressing.

He set off again at a gallop, and this time I could not keep up with him; I reached home a quarter of an hour after him.

"That's what love is,"-I said to myself again, as I sat at night before my writing-table, on which copy-books and text-books had already begun to make their appearance,-"that is what passion is!... How is it possible not to revolt, how is it possible to endure a blow from any one whomsoever... even from the hand that is most dear? But evidently it can be done if one is in love... And I... I imagined..."

The last month had aged me greatly, and my love, with all its agitations

and sufferings, seemed to me like something very petty and childish and wretched in comparison with that other unknown something at which I could hardly even guess, and which frightened me like a strange, beautiful but menacing face that one strives, in vain, to get a good look at in the semi-darkness...

That night I had a strange and dreadful dream. I thought I was entering a low, dark room... My father was standing there, riding-whip in hand, and stamping his feet; Zinaída was crouching in one corner and had a red mark, not on her arm, but on her forehead... and behind the two rose up Byelovzóroff, all bathed in blood, with his pale lips open, and wrathfully menacing my father.

Two months later I entered the university, and six months afterward my father died (of an apoplectic stroke) in Petersburg, whither he had just removed with my mother and myself. A few days before his death my father had received a letter from Moscow which had agitated him extremely... He went to beg something of my mother and, I was told, even wept,-he, my father! On the very morning of the day on which he had the stroke, he had begun a letter to me in the French language: "My son,"-he wrote to me,-"fear the love of women, fear that happiness, that poison..." After his death my mother sent a very considerable sum of money to Moscow.

XXII

Four years passed. I had but just left the university, and did not yet quite know what to do with myself, at what door to knock; in the meanwhile, I was lounging about without occupation. One fine evening I encountered Maidánoff in the theatre. He had contrived to marry and enter the government service; but I found him unchanged. He went into unnecessary raptures, just as of old, and became low-spirited as suddenly as ever.

“You know,”-he said to me,-“by the way, that Madame Dólsky is here.”

“What Madame Dólsky?”

“Is it possible that you have forgotten? The former Princess Zasyékin, with whom we were all in love, you included. At the villa, near Neskútchny Park, you remember?”

“Did she marry Dólsky?”

“Yes.”

“And is she here in the theatre?”

“No, in Petersburg; she arrived here a few days ago; she is preparing to go abroad.”

“What sort of a man is her husband?”-I asked.

“A very fine young fellow and wealthy. He’s my comrade in the service, a Moscow man. You understand-after that scandal... you must be well acquainted with all that...” (Maidánoff smiled significantly), “it was not easy for her to find a husband; there were consequences... but with her brains everything is possible. Go to her; she will be delighted to see you. She is handsomer than ever.”

Maidánoff gave me Zinaída’s address. She was stopping in the Hotel Demuth. Old memories began to stir in me... I promised myself that I would call upon my former “passion” the next day. But certain affairs turned up: a week elapsed, and when, at last, I betook myself to the Hotel Demuth and inquired for Madame Dólsky I learned that she had died four days previously, almost suddenly, in childbirth.

Something seemed to deal me a blow in the heart. The thought that I might have seen her but had not, and that I should never see her,-that bitter thought seized upon me with all the force of irresistible reproach. “Dead!” I repeated, staring dully at the door-porter, then quietly made my way to the street and walked away, without knowing whither. The whole past surged up

at one blow and stood before me. And now this was the way it had ended, this was the goal of that young, fiery, brilliant life? I thought that-I pictured to myself those dear features, those eyes, those curls in the narrow box, in the damp, underground gloom,-right there, not far from me, who was still alive, and, perchance, only a few paces from my father... I thought all that, I strained my imagination, and yet-

From a mouth indifferent I heard the news of death,

And with indifference did I receive it-

resounded through my soul. O youth, youth! Thou carest for nothing: thou possessest, as it were, all the treasures of the universe; even sorrow comforts thee, even melancholy becomes thee; thou art self-confident and audacious; thou sayest: "I alone live-behold!"-But the days speed on and vanish without a trace and without reckoning, and everything vanishes in thee, like wax in the sun, like snow... And perchance the whole secret of thy charm consists not in the power to do everything, but in the possibility of thinking that thou wilt do everything-consists precisely in the fact that thou scatterest to the winds thy powers which thou hast not understood how to employ in any other way,-in the fact that each one of us seriously regards himself as a prodigal, seriously assumes that he has a right to say: "Oh, what could I not have done, had I not wasted my time!"

And I myself... what did I hope for, what did I expect, what rich future did I foresee, when I barely accompanied with a single sigh, with a single mournful emotion, the spectre of my first love which had arisen for a brief moment?

And what has come to pass of all for which I hoped? Even now, when the shades of evening are beginning to close in upon my life, what is there that has remained for me fresher, more precious than the memory of that morning spring thunder-storm which sped so swiftly past?

But I calumniate myself without cause. Even then, at that frivolous, youthful epoch, I did not remain deaf to the sorrowful voice which responded within me to the triumphant sound which was wafted to me from beyond the grave. I remember that a few days after I learned of Zinaída's death I was present, by my own irresistible longing, at the death-bed of a poor old woman who lived in the same house with us. Covered with rags, with a sack under her head, she died heavily and with difficulty. Her whole life had been passed in a bitter struggle with daily want; she had seen no joy, she had not tasted the honey of happiness-it seemed as though she could not have failed to

rejoice at death, at her release, her repose. But nevertheless, as long as her decrepit body held out, as long as her breast heaved under the icy hand which was laid upon it, until her last strength deserted her, the old woman kept crossing herself and whispering:-“O Lord, forgive my sins,”-and only with the last spark of consciousness did there vanish from her eyes the expression of fear and horror at her approaching end. And I remember that there, by the bedside of that poor old woman, I felt terrified for Zinaída, and felt like praying for her, for my father-and for myself.

THE DISTRICT DOCTOR

One day in autumn on my way back from a remote part of the country I caught cold and fell ill. Fortunately the fever attacked me in the district town at the inn; I sent for the doctor. In half-an-hour the district doctor appeared, a thin, dark-haired man of middle height. He prescribed me the usual sudorific, ordered a mustard-plaster to be put on, very deftly slid a five-ruble note up his sleeve, coughing drily and looking away as he did so, and then was getting up to go home, but somehow fell into talk and remained. I was exhausted with feverishness; I foresaw a sleepless night, and was glad of a little chat with a pleasant companion. Tea was served. My doctor began to converse freely. He was a sensible fellow, and expressed himself with vigour and some humour. Queer things happen in the world: you may live a long while with some people, and be on friendly terms with them, and never once speak openly with them from your soul; with others you have scarcely time to get acquainted, and all at once you are pouring out to him-or he to you-all your secrets, as though you were at confession. I don't know how I gained the confidence of my new friend-anyway, with nothing to lead up to it, he told me a rather curious incident; and here I will report his tale for the information of the indulgent reader. I will try to tell it in the doctor's own words.

"You don't happen to know," he began in a weak and quavering voice (the common result of the use of unmixed Berezov snuff); "you don't happen to know the judge here, Mylov, Pavel Lukich?... You don't know him?... Well, it's all the same." (He cleared his throat and rubbed his eyes.) "Well, you see, the thing happened, to tell you exactly without mistake, in Lent, at the very time of the thaws. I was sitting at his house-our judge's, you know-playing preference. Our judge is a good fellow, and fond of playing preference. Suddenly" (the doctor made frequent use of this word, suddenly) "they tell me, 'There's a servant asking for you.' I say, 'What does he want?' They say, 'He has brought a note-it must be from a patient.' 'Give me the note,' I say. So it is from a patient-well and good-you understand-it's our bread and butter... But this is how it was: a lady, a widow, writes to me; she says, 'My daughter is dying. Come, for God's sake!' she says, 'and the horses have been sent for you.'... Well, that's all right. But she was twenty miles from the town, and it was midnight out of doors, and the roads in such a state,

my word! And as she was poor herself, one could not expect more than two silver rubles, and even that problematic; and perhaps it might only be a matter of a roll of linen and a sack of oatmeal in *payment*. However, duty, you know, before everything: a fellow-creature may be dying. I hand over my cards at once to Kalliopin, the member of the provincial commission, and return home. I look; a wretched little trap was standing at the steps, with peasant's horses, fat-too fat-and their coat as shaggy as felt; and the coachman sitting with his cap off out of respect. Well, I think to myself, 'It's clear, my friend, these patients aren't rolling in riches.'... You smile; but I tell you, a poor man like me has to take everything into consideration... If the coachman sits like a prince, and doesn't touch his cap, and even sneers at you behind his beard, and flicks his whip-then you may bet on six rubles. But this case, I saw, had a very different air. However, I think there's no help for it; duty before everything. I snatch up the most necessary drugs, and set off. Will you believe it? I only just managed to get there at all. The road was infernal: streams, snow, watercourses, and the dyke had suddenly burst there-that was the worst of it! However, I arrived at last. It was a little thatched house. There was a light in the windows; that meant they expected me. I was met by an old lady, very venerable, in a cap. 'Save her!' she says; 'she is dying.' I say, 'Pray don't distress yourself-Where is the invalid?' 'Come this way.' I see a clean little room, a lamp in the corner; on the bed a girl of twenty, unconscious. She was in a burning heat, and breathing heavily-it was fever. There were two other girls, her sisters, scared and in tears. 'Yesterday,' they tell me, 'she was perfectly well and had a good appetite; this morning she complained of her head, and this evening, suddenly, you see, like this.' I say again: 'Pray don't be uneasy.' It's a doctor's duty, you know-and I went up to her and bled her, told them to put on a mustard-plaster, and prescribed a mixture. Meantime I looked at her; I looked at her, you know-there, by God! I had never seen such a face!-she was a beauty, in a word! I felt quite shaken with pity. Such lovely features; such eyes!... But, thank God! she became easier; she fell into a perspiration, seemed to come to her senses, looked round, smiled, and passed her hand over her face... Her sisters bent over her. They ask, 'How are you?' 'All right,' she says, and turns away. I looked at her; she had fallen asleep. 'Well,' I say, 'now the patient should be left alone.' So we all went out on tiptoe; only a maid remained, in case she was wanted. In the parlour there was a samovar standing on the table, and a bottle of rum; in our profession one can't get on without it. They gave me tea; asked

me to stop the night... I consented: where could I go, indeed, at that time of night? The old lady kept groaning. 'What is it?' I say; 'she will live; don't worry yourself; you had better take a little rest yourself; it is about two o'clock.' 'But will you send to wake me if anything happens?' 'Yes, yes.' The old lady went away, and the girls too went to their own room; they made up a bed for me in the parlour. Well, I went to bed-but I could not get to sleep, for a wonder! for in reality I was very tired. I could not get my patient out of my head. At last I could not put up with it any longer; I got up suddenly; I think to myself, 'I will go and see how the patient is getting on.' Her bedroom was next to the parlour. Well, I got up, and gently opened the door-how my heart beat! I looked in: the servant was asleep, her mouth wide open, and even snoring, the wretch! but the patient lay with her face towards me and her arms flung wide apart, poor girl! I went up to her... when suddenly she opened her eyes and stared at me! 'Who is it? who is it?' I was in confusion. 'Don't be alarmed, madam,' I say; 'I am the doctor; I have come to see how you feel.' 'You the doctor?' 'Yes, the doctor; your mother sent for me from the town; we have bled you, madam; now pray go to sleep, and in a day or two, please God! we will set you on your feet again.' 'Ah, yes, yes, doctor, don't let me die... please, please.' 'Why do you talk like that? God bless you!' She is in a fever again, I think to myself; I felt her pulse; yes, she was feverish. She looked at me, and then took me by the hand. 'I will tell you why I don't want to die: I will tell you... Now we are alone; and only, please don't you... not to any one... Listen...' I bent down; she moved her lips quite to my ear; she touched my cheek with her hair-I confess my head went round-and began to whisper... I could make out nothing of it... Ah, she was delirious!... She whispered and whispered, but so quickly, and as if it were not in Russian; at last she finished, and shivering dropped her head on the pillow, and threatened me with her finger: 'Remember, doctor, to no one.' I calmed her somehow, gave her something to drink, waked the servant, and went away."

At this point the doctor again took snuff with exasperated energy, and for a moment seemed stupefied by its effects.

"However," he continued, "the next day, contrary to my expectations, the patient was no better. I thought and thought, and suddenly decided to remain there, even though my other patients were expecting me... And you know one can't afford to disregard that; one's practice suffers if one does. But, in the first place, the patient was really in danger; and secondly, to tell the truth,

I felt strongly drawn to her. Besides, I liked the whole family. Though they were really badly off, they were singularly, I may say, cultivated people... Their father had been a learned man, an author; he died, of course, in poverty, but he had managed before he died to give his children an excellent education; he left a lot of books too. Either because I looked after the invalid very carefully, or for some other reason; anyway, I can venture to say all the household loved me as if I were one of the family... Meantime the roads were in a worse state than ever; all communications, so to say, were cut off completely; even medicine could with difficulty be got from the town... The sick girl was not getting better... Day after day, and day after day... but... here..." (The doctor made a brief pause.) "I declare I don't know how to tell you."... (He again took snuff, coughed, and swallowed a little tea.) "I will tell you without beating about the bush. My patient... how should I say?... Well she had fallen in love with me... or, no, it was not that she was in love... however... really, how should one say?" (The doctor looked down and grew red.) "No," he went on quickly, "in love, indeed! A man should not over-estimate himself. She was an educated girl, clever and well-read, and I had even forgotten my Latin, one may say, completely. As to appearance" (the doctor looked himself over with a smile) "I am nothing to boast of there either. But God Almighty did not make me a fool; I don't take black for white; I know a thing or two; I could see very clearly, for instance that Aleksandra Andreyevna-that was her name-did not feel love for me, but had a friendly, so to say, inclination-a respect or something for me. Though she herself perhaps mistook this sentiment, anyway this was her attitude; you may form your own judgment of it. But," added the doctor, who had brought out all these disconnected sentences without taking breath, and with obvious embarrassment, "I seem to be wandering rather-you won't understand anything like this... There, with your leave, I will relate it all in order."

He drank off a glass of tea, and began in a calmer voice.

"Well, then. My patient kept getting worse and worse. You are not a doctor, my good sir; you cannot understand what passes in a poor fellow's heart, especially at first, when he begins to suspect that the disease is getting the upper hand of him. What becomes of his belief in himself? You suddenly grow so timid; it's indescribable. You fancy then that you have forgotten everything you knew, and that the patient has no faith in you, and that other people begin to notice how distracted you are, and tell you the symptoms with reluctance; that they are looking at you suspiciously, whispering... Ah!

it's horrid! There must be a remedy, you think, for this disease, if one could find it. Isn't this it? You try-no, that's not it! You don't allow the medicine the necessary time to do good... You clutch at one thing, then at another. Sometimes you take up a book of medical prescriptions-here it is, you think! Sometimes, by Jove, you pick one out by chance, thinking to leave it to fate... But meantime a fellow-creature's dying, and another doctor would have saved him. 'We must have a consultation,' you say; 'I will not take the responsibility on myself.' And what a fool you look at such times! Well, in time you learn to bear it; it's nothing to you. A man has died-but it's not your fault; you treated him by the rules. But what's still more torture to you is to see blind faith in you, and to feel yourself that you are not able to be of use. Well, it was just this blind faith that the whole of Aleksandra Andreyevna's family had in me; they had forgotten to think that their daughter was in danger. I, too, on my side assure them that it's nothing, but meantime my heart sinks into my boots. To add to our troubles, the roads were in such a state that the coachman was gone for whole days together to get medicine. And I never left the patient's room; I could not tear myself away; I tell her amusing stories, you know, and play cards with her. I watch by her side at night. The old mother thanks me with tears in her eyes; but I think to myself, 'I don't deserve your gratitude.' I frankly confess to you-there is no object in concealing it now-I was in love with my patient. And Aleksandra Andreyevna had grown fond of me; she would not sometimes let any one be in her room but me. She began to talk to me, to ask me questions; where I had studied, how I lived, who are my people, whom I go to see. I feel that she ought not to talk; but to forbid her to-to forbid her resolutely, you know-I could not. Sometimes I held my head in my hands, and asked myself, "What are you doing, villain?"... And she would take my hand and hold it, give me a long, long look, and turn away, sigh, and say, 'How good you are!' Her hands were so feverish, her eyes so large and languid... 'Yes,' she says, 'you are a good, kind man; you are not like our neighbours... No, you are not like that... Why did I not know you till now!' 'Aleksandra Andreyevna, calm yourself,' I say... 'I feel, believe me, I don't know how I have gained... but there, calm yourself... All will be right; you will be well again.' And meanwhile I must tell you," continued the doctor, bending forward and raising his eyebrows, "that they associated very little with the neighbours, because the smaller people were not on their level, and pride hindered them from being friendly with the rich. I tell you, they were an exceptionally

cultivated family; so you know it was gratifying for me. She would only take her medicine from my hands... she would lift herself up, poor girl, with my aid, take it, and gaze at me... My heart felt as if it were bursting. And meanwhile she was growing worse and worse, worse and worse, all the time; she will die, I think to myself; she must die. Believe me, I would sooner have gone to the grave myself; and here were her mother and sisters watching me, looking into my eyes... and their faith in me was wearing away. 'Well? how is she?' 'Oh, all right, all right!' All right, indeed! My mind was failing me. Well, I was sitting one night alone again by my patient. The maid was sitting there too, and snoring away in full swing; I can't find fault with the poor girl, though; she was worn out too. Aleksandra Andreyevna had felt very unwell all the evening; she was very feverish. Until midnight she kept tossing about; at last she seemed to fall asleep; at least, she lay still without stirring. The lamp was burning in the corner before the holy image. I sat there, you know, with my head bent; I even dozed a little. Suddenly it seemed as though some one touched me in the side; I turned round... Good God! Aleksandra Andreyevna was gazing with intent eyes at me... her lips parted, her cheeks seemed burning. 'What is it?' 'Doctor, shall I die?' 'Merciful Heavens!' 'No, doctor, no; please don't tell me I shall live... don't say so... If you knew... Listen! for God's sake don't conceal my real position,' and her breath came so fast. 'If I can know for certain that I must die... then I will tell you all-all!' 'Aleksandra Andreyevna, I beg!' 'Listen; I have not been asleep at all... I have been looking at you a long while... For God's sake!... I believe in you; you are a good man, an honest man; I entreat you by all that is sacred in the world-tell me the truth! If you knew how important it is for me... Doctor, for God's sake tell me... Am I in danger?' 'What can I tell you, Aleksandra Andreyevna, pray?' 'For God's sake, I beseech you!' 'I can't disguise from you,' I say, 'Aleksandra Andreyevna; you are certainly in danger; but God is merciful.' 'I shall die, I shall die.' And it seemed as though she were pleased; her face grew so bright; I was alarmed. 'Don't be afraid, don't be afraid! I am not frightened of death at all.' She suddenly sat up and leaned on her elbow. 'Now... yes, now I can tell you that I thank you with my whole heart... that you are kind and good-that I love you!' I stare at her, like one possessed; it was terrible for me, you know. 'Do you hear, I love you!' 'Aleksandra Andreyevna, how have I deserved-' 'No, no, you don't-you don't understand me.'... And suddenly she stretched out her arms, and taking my head in her hands, she kissed it... Believe me, I almost screamed aloud... I threw myself

on my knees, and buried my head in the pillow. She did not speak; her fingers trembled in my hair; I listen; she is weeping. I began to soothe her, to assure her... I really don't know what I did say to her. 'You will wake up the girl,' I say to her; 'Aleksandra Andreyevna, I thank you... believe me... calm yourself.' 'Enough, enough!' she persisted; 'never mind all of them; let them wake, then; let them come in-it does not matter; I am dying, you see... And what do you fear? why are you afraid? Lift up your head... Or, perhaps, you don't love me; perhaps I am wrong... In that case, forgive me.' 'Aleksandra Andreyevna, what are you saying!... I love you, Aleksandra Andreyevna.' She looked straight into my eyes, and opened her arms wide. 'Then take me in your arms.' I tell you frankly, I don't know how it was I did not go mad that night. I feel that my patient is killing herself; I see that she is not fully herself; I understand, too, that if she did not consider herself on the point of death, she would never have thought of me; and, indeed, say what you will, it's hard to die at twenty without having known love; this was what was torturing her; this was why, in despair, she caught at me-do you understand now? But she held me in her arms, and would not let me go. 'Have pity on me, Aleksandra Andreyevna, and have pity on yourself,' I say. 'Why,' she says; 'what is there to think of? You know I must die.'... This she repeated incessantly... 'If I knew that I should return to life, and be a proper young lady again, I should be ashamed... of course, ashamed... but why now?' 'But who has said you will die?' 'Oh, no, leave off! you will not deceive me; you don't know how to lie-look at your face.'... 'You shall live, Aleksandra Andreyevna; I will cure you; we will ask your mother's blessing... we will be united-we will be happy.' 'No, no, I have your word; I must die... you have promised me... you have told me.'... It was cruel for me-cruel for many reasons. And see what trifling things can do sometimes; it seems nothing at all, but it's painful. It occurred to her to ask me, what is my name; not my surname, but my first name. I must needs be so unlucky as to be called Trifon. Yes, indeed; Trifon Ivanich. Every one in the house called me doctor. However, there's no help for it. I say, 'Trifon, madam.' She frowned, shook her head, and muttered something in French-ah, something unpleasant, of course!-and then she laughed-disagreeably too. Well, I spent the whole night with her in this way. Before morning I went away, feeling as though I were mad. When I went again into her room it was daytime, after morning tea. Good God! I could scarcely recognise her; people are laid in their grave looking better than that. I swear to you, on my honour, I don't understand-I

absolutely don't understand-now, how I lived through that experience. Three days and nights my patient still lingered on. And what nights! What things she said to me! And on the last night-only imagine to yourself-I was sitting near her, and kept praying to God for one thing only: 'Take her,' I said, 'quickly, and me with her.' Suddenly the old mother comes unexpectedly into the room. I had already the evening before told her-the mother-there was little hope, and it would be well to send for a priest. When the sick girl saw her mother she said: 'It's very well you have come; look at us, we love one another-we have given each other our word.' 'What does she say, doctor? what does she say?' I turned livid. 'She is wandering,' I say; 'the fever.' But she: 'Hush, hush; you told me something quite different just now, and have taken my ring. Why do you pretend? My mother is good-she will forgive-she will understand-and I am dying... I have no need to tell lies; give me your hand.' I jumped up and ran out of the room. The old lady, of course, guessed how it was.

"I will not, however, weary you any longer, and to me too, of course, it's painful to recall all this. My patient passed away the next day. God rest her soul!" the doctor added, speaking quickly and with a sigh. "Before her death she asked her family to go out and leave me alone with her."

"'Forgive me,' she said; 'I am perhaps to blame towards you... my illness... but believe me, I have loved no one more than you... do not forget me... keep my ring.'"

The doctor turned away; I took his hand.

"Ah!" he said, "let us talk of something else, or would you care to play preference for a small stake? It is not for people like me to give way to exalted emotions. There's only one thing for me to think of; how to keep the children from crying and the wife from scolding. Since then, you know, I have had time to enter into lawful wedlock, as they say... Oh... I took a merchant's daughter-seven thousand for her dowry. Her name's Akulina; it goes well with Trifon. She is an ill-tempered woman, I must tell you, but luckily she's asleep all day... Well, shall it be preference?"

We sat down to preference for halfpenny points. Trifon Ivanich won two rubles and a half from me, and went home late, well pleased with his success.

MUMU

Translated by Constance Garnett.

In one of the outlying streets of Moscow, in a gray house with white columns and a balcony, warped all askew, there was once living a lady, a widow, surrounded by a numerous household of serfs. Her sons were in the government service at Petersburg; her daughters were married; she went out very little, and in solitude lived through the last years of her miserly and dreary old age. Her day, a joyless and gloomy day, had long been over; but the evening of her life was blacker than night.

Of all her servants, the most remarkable personage was the porter, Gerasim, a man full twelve inches over the normal height, of heroic build, and deaf and dumb from his birth. The lady, his owner, had brought him up from the village where he lived alone in a little hut, apart from his brothers, and was reckoned about the most punctual of her peasants in the payment of the seignorial dues. Endowed with extraordinary strength, he did the work of four men; work flew apace under his hands, and it was a pleasant sight to see him when he was ploughing, while, with his huge palms pressing hard upon the plough, he seemed alone, unaided by his poor horse, to cleave the yielding bosom of the earth, or when, about St. Peter's Day, he plied his scythe with a furious energy that might have mown a young birch copse up by the roots, or swiftly and untiringly wielded a flail over two yards long; while the hard oblong muscles of his shoulders rose and fell like a lever. His perpetual silence lent a solemn dignity to his unwearying labor. He was a splendid peasant, and, except for his affliction, any girl would have been glad to marry him... But now they had taken Gerasim to Moscow, bought him boots, had him made a full-skirted coat for summer, a sheepskin for winter, put into his hand a broom and a spade, and appointed him porter.

At first he intensely disliked his new mode of life. From his childhood he had been used to field labor, to village life. Shut off by his affliction from the society of men, he had grown up, dumb and mighty, as a tree grows on a fruitful soil. When he was transported to the town, he could not understand what was being done with him; he was miserable and stupefied, with the stupefaction of some strong young bull, taken straight from the meadow, where the rich grass stood up to his belly, taken and put in the truck of a

railway train, and there, while smoke and sparks and gusts of steam puff out upon the sturdy beast, he is whirled onwards, whirled along with loud roar and whistle, whither-God knows! What Gerasim had to do in his new duties seemed a mere trifle to him after his hard toil as a peasant; in half an hour all his work was done, and he would once more stand stock-still in the middle of the courtyard, staring open-mouthed at all the passers-by, as though trying to wrest from them the explanation of his perplexing position; or he would suddenly go off into some corner, and flinging a long way off the broom or the spade, throw himself on his face on the ground, and lie for hours together without stirring, like a caged beast. But man gets used to anything, and Gerasim got used at last to living in town. He had little work to do; his whole duty consisted in keeping the courtyard clean, bringing in a barrel of water twice a day, splitting and dragging in wood for the kitchen and the house, keeping out strangers, and watching at night. And it must be said he did his duty zealously. In his courtyard there was never a shaving lying about, never a speck of dust; if sometimes, in the muddy season, the wretched nag, put under his charge for fetching water, got stuck in the road, he would simply give it a shove with his shoulder, and set not only the cart but the horse itself moving. If he set to chopping wood, the axe fairly rang like glass, and chips and chunks flew in all directions. And as for strangers, after he had one night caught two thieves and knocked their heads together-knocked them so that there was not the slightest need to take them to the police-station afterwards-every one in the neighborhood began to feel a great respect for him; even those who came in the daytime, by no means robbers, but simply unknown persons, at the sight of the terrible porter, waved and shouted to him as though he could hear their shouts. With all the rest of the servants, Gerasim was on terms hardly friendly-they were afraid of him-but familiar; he regarded them as his fellows. They explained themselves to him by signs, and he understood them, and exactly carried out all orders, but knew his own rights too, and soon no one dared to take his seat at the table. Gerasim was altogether of a strict and serious temper, he liked order in everything; even the cocks did not dare to fight in his presence, or woe betide them! Directly he caught sight of them, he would seize them by the legs, swing them ten times round in the air like a wheel, and throw them in different directions. There were geese, too, kept in the yard; but the goose, as is well known, is a dignified and reasonable bird: Gerasim felt a respect for them, looked after them, and fed them; he was himself not unlike a gander of the steppes. He

was assigned a little garret over the kitchen; he arranged it himself to his own liking, made a bedstead in it of oak boards on four stumps of wood for legs-a truly Titanic bedstead; one might have put a ton or two on it-it would not have bent under the load; under the bed was a solid chest; in a corner stood a little table of the same strong kind, and near the table a three-legged stool, so solid and squat that Gerasim himself would sometimes pick it up and drop it again with a smile of delight. The garret was locked up by means of a padlock that looked like a kalatch or basket-shaped loaf, only black; the key of this padlock Gerasim always carried about him in his girdle. He did not like people to come to his garret.

So passed a year, at the end of which a little incident befell Gerasim.

The old lady, in whose service he lived as porter, adhered in everything to the ancient ways, and kept a large number of servants. In her house were not only laundresses, sempstresses, carpenters, tailors and tailoresses, there was even a harness-maker-he was reckoned as a veterinary surgeon, too,-and a doctor for the servants; there was a household doctor for the mistress; there was, lastly, a shoemaker, by name Kapiton Klimov, a sad drunkard. Klimov regarded himself as an injured creature, whose merits were unappreciated, a cultivated man from Petersburg, who ought not to be living in Moscow without occupation-in the wilds, so to speak; and if he drank, as he himself expressed it emphatically, with a blow on his chest, it was sorrow drove him to it. So one day his mistress had a conversation about him with her head steward, Gavril, a man whom, judging solely from his little yellow eyes and nose like a duck's beak, fate itself, it seemed, had marked out as a person in authority. The lady expressed her regret at the corruption of the morals of Kapiton, who had, only the evening before, been picked up somewhere in the street.

"Now, Gavril," she observed, all of a sudden, "now, if we were to marry him, what do you think, perhaps he would be steadier?"

"Why not marry him, indeed, 'm? He could be married, 'm," answered Gavril, "and it would be a very good thing, to be sure, 'm."

"Yes; only who is to marry him?"

"Ay, 'm. But that's at your pleasure, 'm. He may, any way, so to say, be wanted for something; he can't be turned adrift altogether."

"I fancy he likes Tatiana."

Gavril was on the point of making some reply, but he shut his lips tightly.

"Yes!... let him marry Tatiana," the lady decided, taking a pinch of snuff complacently, "Do you hear?"

"Yes, 'm," Gavril articulated, and he withdrew.

Returning to his own room (it was in a little lodge, and was almost filled up with metal-bound trunks), Gavril first sent his wife away, and then sat down at the window and pondered. His mistress's unexpected arrangement had clearly put him in a difficulty. At last he got up and sent to call Kapiton. Kapiton made his appearance... But before reporting their conversation to the reader, we consider it not out of place to relate in few words who was this Tatiana, whom it was to be Kapiton's lot to marry, and why the great lady's order had disturbed the steward.

Tatiana, one of the laundresses referred to above (as a trained and skilful laundress she was in charge of the fine linen only), was a woman of twenty-eight, thin, fair-haired, with moles on her left cheek. Moles on the left cheek are regarded as of evil omen in Russia—a token of unhappy life... Tatiana could not boast of her good luck. From her earliest youth she had been badly treated; she had done the work of two, and had never known affection; she had been poorly clothed and had received the smallest wages. Relations she had practically none; an uncle she had once had, a butler, left behind in the country as useless, and other uncles of hers were peasants—that was all. At one time she had passed for a beauty, but her good looks were very soon over. In disposition, she was very meek, or, rather, scared; towards herself, she felt perfect indifference; of others, she stood in mortal dread; she thought of nothing but how to get her work done in good time, never talked to any one, and trembled at the very name of her mistress, though the latter scarcely knew her by sight. When Gerasim was brought from the country, she was ready to die with fear on seeing his huge figure, tried all she could to avoid meeting him, even dropped her eyelids when sometimes she chanced to run past him, hurrying from the house to the laundry. Gerasim at first paid no special attention to her, then he used to smile when she came his way, then he began even to stare admiringly at her, and at last he never took his eyes off her. She took his fancy, whether by the mild expression of her face or the timidity of her movements, who can tell? So one day she was stealing across the yard, with a starched dressing-jacket of her mistress's carefully poised on her outspread fingers... some one suddenly grasped her vigorously by the elbow; she turned round and fairly screamed; behind her stood Gerasim. With a foolish smile, making inarticulate caressing grunts, he held out to her a

gingerbread cock with gold tinsel on his tail and wings. She was about to refuse it, but he thrust it forcibly into her hand, shook his head, walked away, and turning round, once more grunted something very affectionately to her.

From that day forward he gave her no peace; wherever she went, he was on the spot at once, coming to meet her, smiling, grunting, waving his hands; all at once he would pull a ribbon out of the bosom of his smock and put it in her hand, or would sweep the dust out of her way. The poor girl simply did not know how to behave or what to do. Soon the whole household knew of the dumb porter's wiles; jeers, jokes, sly hints, were showered upon Tatiana. At Gerasim, however, it was not every one who would dare to scoff; he did not like jokes; indeed, in his presence, she, too, was left in peace. Whether she liked it or not, the girl found herself to be under his protection. Like all deaf-mutes, he was very suspicious, and very readily perceived when they were laughing at him or at her. One day, at dinner, the wardrobe-keeper, Tatiana's superior, fell to nagging, as it is called, at her, and brought the poor thing to such a state that she did not know where to look, and was almost crying with vexation. Gerasim got up all of a sudden, stretched out his gigantic hand, laid it on the wardrobe-maid's head, and looked into her face with such grim ferocity that her head positively flopped upon the table. Every one was still. Gerasim took up his spoon again and went on with his cabbage-soup. "Look at him, the dumb devil, the wood-demon!" they all muttered in undertones, while the wardrobe-maid got up and went out into the maid's room. Another time, noticing that Kapiton-the same Kapiton who was the subject of the conversation reported above-was gossiping somewhat too attentively with Tatiana, Gerasim beckoned him to him, led him into the cartshed, and taking up a shaft that was standing in a corner by one end, lightly, but most significantly, menaced him with it. Since then no one addressed a word to Tatiana. And all this cost him nothing. It is true the wardrobe-maid, as soon as she reached the maids' room, promptly fell into a fainting fit, and behaved altogether so skilfully that Gerasim's rough action reached his mistress's knowledge the same day. But the capricious old lady only laughed, and several times, to the great offence of the wardrobe-maid, forced her to repeat "how he bent your head down with his heavy hand," and next day she sent Gerasim a rouble. She looked on him with favor as a strong and faithful watchman. Gerasim stood in considerable awe of her, but, all the same, he had hopes of her favor, and was preparing to go to her with a petition for leave to marry Tatiana. He was only waiting for a new coat,

promised him by the steward, to present a proper appearance before his mistress, when this same mistress suddenly took it into her head to marry Tatiana to Kapiton.

The reader will now readily understand the perturbation of mind that overtook the steward Gavril after his conversation with his mistress. "My lady," he thought, as he sat at the window, "favors Gerasim, to be sure"-(Gavril was well aware of this, and that was why he himself looked on him with an indulgent eye)-"still he is a speechless creature. I could not, indeed, put it before the mistress that Gerasim's courting Tatiana. But, after all, it's true enough; he's a queer sort of husband. But on the other hand, that devil, God forgive me, has only got to find out they're marrying Tatiana to Kapiton, he'll smash up everything in the house, 'pon my soul! There's no reasoning with him; why, he's such a devil, God forgive my sins, there's no getting over him nohow... 'pon my soul!"

Kapiton's entrance broke the thread of Gavril's reflections. The dissipated shoemaker came in, his hands behind him, and lounging carelessly against a projecting angle of the wall, near the door, crossed his right foot in front of his left, and tossed his head, as much as to say, "What do you want?"

Gavril looked at Kapiton, and drummed with his fingers on the window-frame. Kapiton merely screwed up his leaden eyes a little, but he did not look down; he even grinned slightly, and passed his hand over his whitish locks which were sticking up in all directions. "Well, here I am. What is it?"

"You're a pretty fellow," said Gavril, and paused. "A pretty fellow you are, there's no denying!"

Kapiton only twitched his little shoulders. "Are you any better, pray?" he thought to himself.

"Just look at yourself, now, look at yourself," Gavril went on reproachfully; "now, whatever do you look like?"

Kapiton serenely surveyed his shabby, tattered coat and his patched trousers, and with special attention stared at his burst boots, especially the one on the tiptoe of which his right foot so gracefully poised, and he fixed his eyes again on the steward.

"Well?"

"Well?" repeated Gavril. "Well? And then you say well? You look like Old Nick himself, God forgive my saying so, that's what you look like."

Kapiton blinked rapidly.

"Go on abusing me, go on, if you like, Gavril Andreitch," he thought to

himself again.

"Here you've been drunk again," Gavrila began, "drunk again, haven't you? Eh? Come, answer me!"

"Owing to the weakness of my health, I have exposed myself to spirituous beverages, certainly," replied Kapiton.

"Owing to the weakness of your health!... They let you off too easy, that's what it is; and you've been apprenticed in Petersburg... Much you learned in your apprenticeship! You simply eat your bread in idleness."

"In that matter, Gavrila Andreitch, there is One to judge me, the Lord God Himself, and no one else. He also knows what manner of man I be in this world, and whether I eat my bread in idleness. And as concerning your contention regarding drunkenness, in that matter, too, I am not to blame, but rather a friend; he led me into temptation, but was diplomatic and got away, while I..."

"While you were left like a goose, in the street. Ah, you're a dissolute fellow! But that's not the point," the steward went on, "I've something to tell you. Our lady..." here he paused a minute, "it's our lady's pleasure that you should be married. Do you hear? She imagines you may be steadier when you're married. Do you understand?"

"To be sure I do."

"Well, then. For my part I think it would be better to give you a good hiding. But there-it's her business. Well? are you agreeable?"

Kapiton grinned.

"Matrimony is an excellent thing for any one, Gavrila Andreitch; and, as far as I am concerned, I shall be quite agreeable."

"Very well, then," replied Gavrila, while he reflected to himself: "There's no denying the man expresses himself very properly. Only there's one thing," he pursued aloud: "the wife our lady's picked out for you is an unlucky choice."

"Why, who is she, permit me to inquire?"

"Tatiana."

"Tatiana?"

And Kapiton opened his eyes, and moved a little away from the wall.

"Well, what are you in such a taking for?... Isn't she to your taste, hey?"

"Not to my taste, do you say, Gavrila Andreitch? She's right enough, a hard-working steady girl... But you know very well yourself, Gavrila Andreitch, why that fellow, that wild man of the woods, that monster of the

steppes, he's after her, you know..."

"I know, mate, I know all about it," the butler cut him short in a tone of annoyance: "but there, you see..."

"But upon my soul, Gavril Andreitch! why, he'll kill me, by God, he will, he'll crush me like some fly; why, he's got a fist-why, you kindly look yourself what a fist he's got; why, he's simply got a fist like Minin Pozharsky's. You see he's deaf, he beats and does not hear how he's beating! He swings his great fists, as if he's asleep. And there's no possibility of pacifying him; and for why? Why, because, as you know yourself, Gavril Andreitch, he's deaf, and what's more, has no more wit than the heel of my foot. Why, he's a sort of beast, a heathen idol, Gavril Andreitch, and worse... a block of wood; what have I done that I should have to suffer from him now? Sure it is, it's all over me now; I've knocked about, I've had enough to put up with, I've been battered like an earthenware pot, but still I'm a man, after all, and not a worthless pot."

"I know, I know, don't go talking away..."

"Lord, my God!" the shoemaker continued warmly, "when is the end? when, O Lord! A poor wretch I am, a poor wretch whose sufferings are endless! What a life, what a life mine's been come to think of it! In my young days, I was beaten by a German I was 'prentice to; in the prime of life beaten by my own countrymen, and last of all, in ripe years, see what I have been brought to..."

"Ugh, you flabby soul!" said Gavril Andreitch. "Why do you make so many words about it?"

"Why, do you say, Gavril Andreitch? It's not a beating I'm afraid of, Gavril Andreitch. A gentleman may chastise me in private, but give me a civil word before folks, and I'm a man still; but see now, whom I've to do with..."

"Come, get along," Gavril interposed impatiently. Kapiton turned away and staggered off.

"But, if it were not for him," the steward shouted after him, "you would consent for your part?"

"I signify my acquiescence," retorted Kapiton as he disappeared.

His fine language did not desert him, even in the most trying positions.

The steward walked several times up and down the room.

"Well, call Tatiana now," he said at last.

A few instants later, Tatiana had come up almost noiselessly, and was

standing in the doorway.

"What are your orders, Gavril Andreitch?" she said in a soft voice.

The steward looked at her intently.

"Well, Taniusha," he said, "would you like to be married? Our lady has chosen a husband for you?"

"Yes, Gavril Andreitch. And whom has she deigned to name as a husband for me?" she added falteringly.

"Kapiton, the shoemaker."

"Yes, sir."

"He's a feather-brained fellow, that's certain. But it's just for that the mistress reckons upon you."

"Yes, sir."

"There's one difficulty... you know the deaf man, Gerasim, he's courting you, you see. How did you come to bewitch such a bear? But you see, he'll kill you, very like, he's such a bear..."

"He'll kill me, Gavril Andreitch, he'll kill me, and no mistake."

"Kill you... Well we shall see about that. What do you mean by saying he'll kill you? Has he any right to kill you? tell me yourself."

"I don't know, Gavril Andreitch, about his having any right or not."

"What a woman! why, you've made him no promise, I suppose..."

"What are you pleased to ask of me?"

The steward was silent for a little, thinking, "You're a meek soul! Well, that's right," he said aloud; "we'll have another talk with you later, now you can go, Taniusha; I see you're not unruly, certainly."

Tatiana turned, steadied herself a little against the doorpost, and went away.

"And, perhaps, our lady will forget all about this wedding by to-morrow," thought the steward; "and here am I worrying myself for nothing! As for that insolent fellow, we must tie him down if it comes to that, we must let the police know... Ustinya Fyedorovna!" he shouted in a loud voice to his wife, "heat the samovar, my good soul..." All that day Tatiana hardly went out of the laundry. At first she had started crying, then she wiped away her tears, and set to work as before. Kapiton stayed till late at night at the gin-shop with a friend of his, a man of gloomy appearance, to whom he related in detail how he used to live in Petersburg with a gentleman, who would have been all right, except he was a bit too strict, and he had a slight weakness besides, he was too fond of drink; and, as to the fair sex, he didn't stick at anything. His

gloomy companion merely said yes; but when Kapiton announced at last that, in a certain event, he would have to lay hands on himself to-morrow, his gloomy companion remarked that it was bedtime. And they parted in surly silence.

Meanwhile, the steward's anticipations were not fulfilled. The old lady was so much taken up with the idea of Kapiton's wedding, that even in the night she talked of nothing else to one of her companions, who was kept in her house solely to entertain her in case of sleeplessness, and, like a night cabman, slept in the day. When Gavrila came to her after morning tea with his report, her first question was: "And how about our wedding-is it getting on all right?" He replied, of course, that it was getting on first-rate, and that Kapiton would appear before her to pay his reverence to her that day. The old lady was not quite well; she did not give much time to business. The steward went back to his own room, and called a council. The matter certainly called for serious consideration. Tatiana would make no difficulty, of course; but Kapiton had declared in the hearing of all that he had but one head to lose, not two or three... Gerasim turned rapid sullen looks on every one, would not budge from the steps of the maids' quarters, and seemed to guess that some mischief was being hatched against him. They met together. Among them was an old sideboard waiter, nicknamed Uncle Tail, to whom every one looked respectfully for counsel, though all they got out of him was, "Here's a pretty pass! to be sure, to be sure, to be sure!" As a preliminary measure of security, to provide against contingencies, they locked Kapiton up in the lumber-room where the filter was kept; then considered the question with the gravest deliberation. It would, to be sure, be easy to have recourse to force. But Heaven save us! There would be an uproar, the mistress would be put out-it would be awful! What should they do? They thought and thought, and at last thought out a solution. It had many a time been observed that Gerasim could not bear drunkards... As he sat at the gates, he would always turn away with disgust when some one passed by intoxicated, with unsteady steps and his cap on one side of his ear. They resolved that Tatiana should be instructed to pretend to be tipsy, and should pass by Gerasim staggering and reeling about. The poor girl refused for a long while to agree to this, but they persuaded her at last; she saw, too, that it was the only possible way of getting rid of her adorer. She went out. Kapiton was released from the lumber-room; for, after all, he had an interest in the affair. Gerasim was sitting on the curbstone at the gates, scraping the ground with a spade...

From behind every corner, from behind every window-blind, the others were watching him... The trick succeeded beyond all expectations. On seeing Tatiana, at first, he nodded as usual, making caressing, inarticulate sounds; then he looked carefully at her, dropped his spade, jumped up, went up to her, brought his face close to her face... In her fright she staggered more than ever, and shut her eyes... He took her by the arm, whirled her right across the yard, and going into the room where the council had been sitting, pushed her straight at Kapiton. Tatiana fairly swooned away... Gerasim stood, looked at her, waved his hand, laughed, and went off, stepping heavily, to his garret... For the next twenty-four hours he did not come out of it. The postilion Antipka said afterwards that he saw Gerasim through a crack in the wall, sitting on his bedstead, his face in his hand. From time to time he uttered soft regular sounds; he was wailing a dirge, that is, swaying backwards and forwards with his eyes shut, and shaking his head as drivers or bargemen do when they chant their melancholy songs. Antipka could not bear it, and he came away from the crack. When Gerasim came out of the garret next day, no particular change could be observed in him. He only seemed, as it were, more morose, and took not the slightest notice of Tatiana or Kapiton. The same evening, they both had to appear before their mistress with geese under their arms, and in a week's time they were married. Even on the day of the wedding Gerasim showed no change of any sort in his behavior. Only, he came back from the river without water, he had somehow broken the barrel on the road; and at night, in the stable, he washed and rubbed down his horse so vigorously, it swayed like a blade of grass in the wind, and staggered from one leg to the other under his fists of iron.

All this had taken place in the spring. Another year passed by, during which Kapiton became a hopeless drunkard, and as being absolutely of no use for anything, was sent away with the store wagons to a distant village with his wife. On the day of his departure, he put a very good face on it at first, and declared that he would always be at home, send him where they would, even to the other end of the world; but later on he lost heart, began grumbling that he was being taken to uneducated people, and collapsed so completely at last that he could not even put his own hat on. Some charitable soul stuck it on his forehead, set the peak straight in front, and thrust it on with a slap from above. When everything was quite ready, and the peasants already held the reins in their hands, and were only waiting for the words "With God's blessing!" to start, Gerasim came out of his garret, went up to

Tatiana, and gave her as a parting present a red cotton handkerchief he had bought for her a year ago. Tatiana, who had up to that instant borne all the revolting details of her life with great indifference, could not control herself upon that; she burst into tears, and as she took her seat in the cart, she kissed Gerasim three times like a good Christian. He meant to accompany her as far as the town-barrier, and did walk beside her cart for a while, but he stopped suddenly at the Crimean ford, waved his hand, and walked away along the riverside.

It was getting towards evening. He walked slowly, watching the water. All of a sudden he fancied something was floundering in the mud close to the bank. He stooped over, and saw a little white-and-black puppy, who, in spite of all its efforts, could not get out of the water; it was struggling, slipping back, and trembling all over its thin wet little body. Gerasim looked at the unlucky little dog, picked it up with one hand, put it into the bosom of his coat, and hurried with long steps homewards. He went into his garret, put the rescued puppy on his bed, covered it with his thick overcoat, ran first to the stable for straw, and then to the kitchen for a cup of milk. Carefully folding back the overcoat, and spreading out the straw, he set the milk on the bedstead. The poor little puppy was not more than three weeks old, its eyes were just open-one eye still seemed rather larger than the other; it did not know how to lap out of a cup, and did nothing but shiver and blink. Gerasim took hold of its head softly with two fingers, and dipped its little nose into the milk. The pup suddenly began lapping greedily, sniffing, shaking itself, and choking. Gerasim watched and watched it, and all at once he laughed outright... All night long he was waiting on it, keeping it covered, and rubbing it dry. He fell asleep himself at last, and slept quietly and happily by its side.

No mother could have looked after her baby as Gerasim looked after his little nursling. At first she-for the pup turned out to be a bitch-was very weak, feeble, and ugly, but by degrees she grew stronger and improved in looks, and, thanks to the unflagging care of her preserver, in eight months' time she was transformed into a very pretty dog of the spaniel breed, with long ears, a bushy spiral tail, and large, expressive eyes. She was devotedly attached to Gerasim, and was never a yard from his side; she always followed him about wagging her tail. He had even given her a name-the dumb know that their inarticulate noises call the attention of others. He called her Mumu. All the servants in the house liked her, and called her Mumu, too. She was very

intelligent, she was friendly with every one, but was only fond of Gerasim. Gerasim, on his side, loved her passionately, and he did not like it when other people stroked her; whether he was afraid for her, or jealous-God knows! She used to wake him in the morning, pulling at his coat; she used to take the reins in her mouth, and bring him up the old horse that carried the water, with whom she was on very friendly terms. With a face of great importance, she used to go with him to the river; she used to watch his brooms and spades, and never allowed any one to go into his garret. He cut a little hole in his door on purpose for her, and she seemed to feel that only in Gerasim's garret she was completely mistress and at home; and directly she went in, she used to jump with a satisfied air upon the bed. At night she did not sleep at all, but she never barked without sufficient cause, like some stupid house-dog, who, sitting on its hind-legs, blinking, with its nose in the air, barks simply from dullness, at the stars, usually three times in succession. No! Mumu's delicate little voice was never raised without good reason; either some stranger was passing close to the fence, or there was some suspicious sound or rustle somewhere... In fact, she was an excellent watch-dog. It is true that there was another dog in the yard, a tawny old dog with brown spots, called Wolf, but he was never, even at night, let off the chain; and, indeed, he was so decrepit that he did not even wish for freedom. He used to lie curled up in his kennel, and only rarely uttered a sleepy, almost noiseless bark, which broke off at once, as though he were himself aware of its uselessness. Mumu never went into the mistress's house; and when Gerasim carried wood into the rooms, she always stayed behind, impatiently waiting for him at the steps, pricking up her ears and turning her head to right and to left at the slightest creak of the door...

So passed another year. Gerasim went on performing his duties as house-porter, and was very well content with his lot, when suddenly an unexpected incident occurred... One fine summer day the old lady was walking up and down the drawing-room with her dependants. She was in high spirits; she laughed and made jokes. Her servile companions laughed and joked too, but they did not feel particularly mirthful; the household did not much like it, when their mistress was in a lively mood, for, to begin with, she expected from every one prompt and complete participation in her merriment, and was furious if any one showed a face that did not beam with delight; and secondly, these outbursts never lasted long with her, and were usually followed by a sour and gloomy mood. That day she had got up in a lucky

hour; at cards she took the four knaves, which means the fulfilment of one's wishes (she used to try her fortune on the cards every morning), and her tea struck her as particularly delicious, for which her maid was rewarded by words of praise, and by twopence in money. With a sweet smile on her wrinkled lips, the lady walked about the drawing-room and went up to the window. A flower-garden had been laid out before the window, and in the very middle bed, under a rosebush, lay Mumu busily gnawing a bone. The lady caught sight of her.

"Mercy on us!" she cried suddenly; "what dog is that?"

The companion, addressed by the old lady, hesitated, poor thing, in that wretched state of uneasiness which is common in any person in a dependent position who doesn't know very well what significance to give to the exclamation of a superior.

"I d... d... don't know," she faltered; "I fancy it's the dumb man's dog."

"Mercy!" the lady cut her short; "but it's a charming little dog! order it to be brought in. Has he had it long? How is it I've never seen it before?... Order it to be brought in."

The companion flew at once into the hall.

"Boy, boy!" she shouted; "bring Mumu in at once! She's in the flower-garden."

"Her name's Mumu then," observed the lady; "a very nice name."

"Oh, very, indeed!" chimed in the companion. "Make haste, Stepan!"

Stepan, a sturdy-built young fellow, whose duties were those of a footman, rushed headlong into the flower-garden, and tried to capture Mumu, but she cleverly slipped from his fingers, and with her tail in the air, fled full speed to Gerasim, who was at that instant in the kitchen, knocking out and cleaning a barrel, turning it upside down in his hands like a child's drum. Stepan ran after her, and tried to catch her just at her master's feet; but the sensible dog would not let a stranger touch her, and with a bound, she got away. Gerasim looked on with a smile at all this ado; at last, Stepan got up, much amazed, and hurriedly explained to him by signs that the mistress wanted the dog brought in to her. Gerasim was a little astonished; he called Mumu, however, picked her up, and handed her over to Stepan. Stepan carried her into the drawing-room, and put her down on the parquette floor. The old lady began calling the dog to her in a coaxing voice. Mumu, who had never in her life been in such magnificent apartments, was very much frightened, and made a rush for the door, but, being driven back by the

obsequious Stepan, she began trembling, and huddled close up against the wall.

"Mumu, Mumu, come to me, come to your mistress," said the lady; "come, silly thing... don't be afraid."

"Come, Mumu, come to the mistress," repeated the companions. "Come along!"

But Mumu looked round her uneasily, and did not stir.

"Bring her something to eat," said the old lady. "How stupid she is! she won't come to her mistress. What's she afraid of?"

"She's not used to your honor yet," ventured one of the companions in a timid and conciliatory voice.

Stepan brought in a saucer of milk, and set it down before Mumu, but Mumu would not even sniff at the milk, and still shivered, and looked round as before.

"Ah, what a silly you are!" said the lady, and going up to her, she stooped down, and was about to stroke her, but Mumu turned her head abruptly, and showed her teeth. The lady hurriedly drew back her hand...

A momentary silence followed. Mumu gave a faint whine, as though she would complain and apologize... The old lady moved back, scowling. The dog's sudden movement had frightened her.

"Ah!" shrieked all the companions at once, "she's not bitten you, has she? Heaven forbid! (Mumu had never bitten any one in her life.) Ah! ah!"

"Take her away," said the old lady in a changed voice. "Wretched little dog! What a spiteful creature!"

And, turning round deliberately, she went towards her boudoir. Her companions looked timidly at one another, and were about to follow her, but she stopped, stared coldly at them, and said, "What's that for, pray? I've not called you," and went out.

The companions waved their hands to Stepan in despair. He picked up Mumu, and flung her promptly outside the door, just at Gerasim's feet, and half an hour later a profound stillness led in the house, and the old lady sat on her sofa looking blacker than a thundercloud.

What trifles, if you think of it, will sometimes disturb any one!

Till evening the lady was out of humor; she did not talk to any one, did not play cards, and passed a bad night. She fancied the eau-de-Cologne they gave her was not the same as she usually had, and that her pillow smelt of soap, and she made the wardrobe-maid smell all the bed linen-in fact she was

very upset and cross altogether. Next morning she ordered Gavril to be summoned an hour earlier than usual.

"Tell me, please," she began, directly the latter, not without some inward trepidation, crossed the threshold of her boudoir, "what dog was that barking all night in our yard? It wouldn't let me sleep!"

"A dog, 'm... what dog, 'm... may be, the dumb man's dog, 'm," he brought out in a rather unsteady voice.

"I don't know whether it was the dumb man's or whose, but it wouldn't let me sleep. And I wonder what we have such a lot of dogs for! I wish to know. We have a yard dog, haven't we?"

"Oh yes, 'm, we have, 'm. Wolf, 'm."

"Well, why more? what do we want more dogs for? It's simply introducing disorder. There's no one in control in the house-that's what it is. And what does the dumb man want with a dog? Who gave him leave to keep dogs in my yard? Yesterday I went to the window, and there it was lying in the flower-garden; it had dragged in nastiness it was gnawing, and my roses are planted there..."

The lady ceased.

"Let her be gone from to-day... do you hear?"

"Yes, 'm."

"To-day. Now go. I will send for you later for the report."

Gavril went away.

As he went through the drawing-room, the steward, by way of maintaining order, moved a bell from one table to another; he stealthily blew his duck-like nose in the hall, and went into the outer-hall. In the outer-hall, on a locker, was Stepan asleep in the attitude of a slain warrior in a battalion picture, his bare legs thrust out below the coat which served him for a blanket. The steward gave him a shove, and whispered some instructions to him, to which Stepan responded with something between a yawn and a laugh. The steward went away, and Stepan got up, put on his coat and his boots, went out and stood on the steps. Five minutes had not passed before Gerasim made his appearance with a huge bundle of hewn logs on his back, accompanied by the inseparable Mumu. (The lady had given orders that her bedroom and boudoir should be heated at times even in the summer.) Gerasim turned sideways before the door, shoved it open with his shoulder, and staggered into the house with his load. Mumu, as usual, stayed behind to wait for him. Then Stepan, seizing his chance, suddenly pounced on her, like

a kite on a chicken, held her down to the ground, gathered her up in his arms, and without even putting on his cap, ran out of the yard with her, got into the first fly he met, and galloped off to a market-place. There he soon found a purchaser, to whom he sold her for a shilling, on condition that he would keep her for at least a week tied up; then he returned at once. But before he got home, he got off the fly, and going right round the yard, jumped over the fence into the yard from a back street. He was afraid to go in at the gate for fear of meeting Gerasim.

His anxiety was unnecessary, however; Gerasim was no longer in the yard. On coming out of the house he had at once missed Mumu. He never remembered her failing to wait for his return, and began running up and down, looking for her, and calling her in his own way... He rushed up to his garret, up to the hay-loft, ran out into the street, this way and that... She was lost! He turned to the other serfs, with the most despairing signs, questioned them about her, pointing to her height from the ground, describing her with his hands... Some of them really did not know what had become of Mumu, and merely shook their heads; others did know, and smiled to him for all response; while the steward assumed an important air, and began scolding the coachmen. Then Gerasim ran right away out of the yard.

It was dark by the time he came back. From his worn-out look, his unsteady walk, and his dusty clothes, it might be surmised that he had been running over half Moscow. He stood still opposite the windows of the mistress's house, took a searching look at the steps where a group of house-serfs were crowded together, turned away, and uttered once more his inarticulate "Mumu." Mumu did not answer. He went away. Every one looked after him, but no one smiled or said a word, and the inquisitive postilion Antipka reported next morning in the kitchen that the dumb man had been groaning all night.

All the next day Gerasim did not show himself, so that they were obliged to send the coachman Potap for water instead of him, at which the coachman Potap was anything but pleased. The lady asked Gavril if her orders had been carried out. Gavril replied that they had. The next morning Gerasim came out of his garret, and went about his work. He came in to his dinner, ate it, and went out again, without a greeting to any one. His face, which had always been lifeless, as with all deaf-mutes, seemed now to be turned to stone. After dinner he went out of the yard again, but not for long; he came back, and went straight up to the hay-loft. Night came on, a clear moonlight

night. Gerasim lay breathing heavily, and incessantly turning from side to side. Suddenly he felt something pull at the skirt of his coat. He started, but did not raise his head, and even shut his eyes tighter. But again there was a pull, stronger than before; he jumped up before him, with an end of string round her neck, was Mumu, twisting and turning. A prolonged cry of delight broke from his speechless breast; he caught up Mumu, and hugged her tight in his arms, she licked his nose and eyes, and beard and moustache, all in one instant... He stood a little, thought a minute, crept cautiously down from the hay-loft, looked round, and having satisfied himself that no one could see him, made his way successfully to his garret. Gerasim had guessed before that his dog had not got lost by her own doing, that she must have been taken away by the mistress's orders; the servants had explained to him by signs that his Mumu had snapped at her, and he determined to take his own measures. First he fed Mumu with a bit of bread, fondled her, and put her to bed, then he fell to meditating, and spent the whole night long in meditating how he could best conceal her. At last he decided to leave her all day in the garret, and only to come in now and then to see her, and to take her out at night. The hole in the door he stopped up effectually with his old overcoat, and almost before it was light he was already in the yard, as though nothing had happened, even-innocent guile!-the same expression of melancholy on his face. It did not even occur to the poor deaf man that Mumu would betray herself by her whining; in reality, everyone in the house was soon aware that the dumb man's dog had come back, and was locked up in his garret, but from sympathy with him and with her, and partly, perhaps, from dread of him, they did not let him know that they had found out his secret. The steward scratched his head, and gave a despairing wave of his head, as much as to say, "Well, well, God have mercy on him! If only it doesn't come to the mistress's ears!"

But the dumb man had never shown such energy as on that day; he cleaned and scraped the whole courtyard, pulled up every single weed with his own hand, tugged up every stake in the fence of the flower-garden, to satisfy himself that they were strong enough, and unaided drove them in again; in fact, he toiled and labored so that even the old lady noticed his zeal. Twice in the course of the day Gerasim went stealthily in to see his prisoner; when night came on, he lay down to sleep with her in the garret, not in the hay-loft, and only at two o'clock in the night he went out to take her a turn in the fresh air.

After walking about the courtyard a good while with her, he was just turning back, when suddenly a rustle was heard behind the fence on the side of the back street. Mumu pricked up her ears, growled-went up to the fence, sniffed, and gave vent to a loud shrill bark. Some drunkard had thought fit to take refuge under the fence for the night. At that very time the old lady had just fallen asleep after a prolonged fit of "nervous agitation"; these fits of agitation always overtook her after too hearty a supper. The sudden bark waked her up: her heart palpitated, and she felt faint. "Girls, girls!" she moaned. "Girls!" The terrified maids ran into her bedroom. "Oh, oh, I am dying!" she said, flinging her arms about in her agitation. "Again, that dog, again!... Oh, send for the doctor. They mean to be the death of me... The dog, the dog again! Oh!" And she let her head fall back, which always signified a swoon. They rushed for the doctor, that is, for the household physician, Hariton. This doctor, whose whole qualification consisted in wearing soft-soled boots, knew how to feel the pulse delicately. He used to sleep fourteen hours out of the twenty-four, but the rest of the time he was always sighing, and continually dosing the old lady with cherrybay drops. This doctor ran up at once, fumigated the room with burnt feathers, and when the old lady opened her eyes, promptly offered her a wineglass of the hallowed drops on a silver tray. The old lady took them, but began again at once in a tearful voice complaining of the dog, of Gavril, and of her fate, declaring that she was a poor old woman, and that every one had forsaken her, no one pitied her, every one wished her dead. Meanwhile the luckless Mumu had gone on barking, while Gerasim tried in vain to call her away, from the fence. "There... there... again," groaned the old lady, and once more she turned up the whites of her eyes. The doctor whispered to a maid, she rushed into the outer hall, and shook Stepan, he ran to wake Gavril, Gavril in a fury ordered the whole household to get up.

Gerasim turned round, saw lights and shadows moving in the windows, and with an instinct of coming trouble in his heart, put Mumu under his arm, ran into his garret, and locked himself in. A few minutes later five men were banging at his door, but feeling the resistance of the bolt, they stopped. Gavril ran up in a fearful state of mind, and ordered them all to wait there and watch till morning. Then he flew off himself to the maids' quarter, and through an old companion, Liubov Liubimovna, with whose assistance he used to steal tea, sugar, and other groceries and to falsify the accounts, sent word to the mistress that the dog had unhappily run back from somewhere,

but that to-morrow she should be killed, and would the mistress be so gracious as not to be angry and to overlook it. The old lady would probably not have been so soon appeased, but the doctor had in his haste given her fully forty drops instead of twelve. The strong dose of narcotic acted; in a quarter of an hour the old lady was in a sound and peaceful sleep; while Gerasim was lying with a white face on his bed, holding Mumu's mouth tightly shut.

Next morning the lady woke up rather late. Gavrila was waiting till she should be awake, to give the order for a final assault on Gerasim's stronghold, while he prepared himself to face a fearful storm. But the storm did not come off. The old lady lay in bed and sent for the eldest of her dependent companions.

"Liubov Liubimovna," she began in a subdued weak voice-she was fond of playing the part of an oppressed and forsaken victim; needless to say, every one in the house was made extremely uncomfortable at such times-"Liubov Liubimovna, you see my position; go, my love, to Gavrila Andreitch, and talk to him a little. Can he really prize some wretched cur above the repose-the very life-of his mistress? I could not bear to think so," she added, with an expression of deep feeling. "Go, my love; be so good as to go to Gavrila Andreitch for me."

Liubov Liubimovna went to Gavrila's room. What conversation passed between them is not known, but a short time after, a whole crowd of people was moving across the yard in the direction of Gerasim's garret. Gavrila walked in front, holding his cap on with his hand, though there was no wind. The footmen and cooks were close behind him; Uncle Tail was looking out of a window, giving instructions, that is to say, simply waving his hands. At the rear there was a crowd of small boys skipping and hopping along; half of them were outsiders who had run up. On the narrow staircase leading to the garret sat one guard; at the door were standing two more with sticks. They began to mount the stairs, which they entirely blocked up. Gavrila went up to the door, knocked with his fist, shouting, "Open the door!"

A stifled bark was audible, but there was no answer.

"Open the door, I tell you," he repeated.

"But, Gavrila Andreitch," Stepan observed from below, "he's deaf, you know-he doesn't hear."

They all laughed.

"What are we to do?" Gavrila rejoined from above.

"Why, there's a hole there in the door," answered Stepan, "so you shake the stick in there."

Gavrila bent down.

"He's stuffed it up with a coat or something."

"Well, you just push the coat in."

At this moment a smothered bark was heard again.

"See, see-she speaks for herself," was remarked in the crowd, and again they laughed.

Gavrila scratched his ear.

"No, mate," he responded at last, "you can poke the coat in yourself, if you like."

"All right, let me."

And Stepan scrambled up, took the stick, pushed in the coat, and began waving the stick about in the opening, saying, "Come out, come out!" as he did so. He was still waving the stick, when suddenly the door of the garret was flung open; all the crowd flew pell-mell down the stairs instantly, Gavrila first of all. Uncle Tail locked the window.

"Come, come, come," shouted Gavrila from the yard, "mind what you're about."

Gerasim stood without stirring in his doorway. The crowd gathered at the foot of the stairs. Gerasim, with his arms akimbo, looked down at all these poor creatures in German coats; in his red peasant's shirt he looked like a giant before them. Gavrila took a step forward.

"Mind, mate," said he, "don't be insolent."

And he began to explain to him by signs that the mistress insists on having his dog; that he must hand it over at once, or it would be the worse for him.

Gerasim looked at him, pointed to the dog, made a motion with his hand round his neck, as though he were pulling a noose tight, and glanced with a face of inquiry at the steward.

"Yes, yes," the latter assented, nodding; "yes, just so."

Gerasim dropped his eyes, then all of a sudden roused himself and pointed to Mumu, who was all the while standing beside him, innocently wagging her tail and pricking up her ears inquisitively. Then he repeated the strangling action round his neck and significantly struck himself on the breast, as though announcing he would take upon himself the task of killing Mumu.

"But you'll deceive us," Gavrilavaved back in response.

Gerasim looked at him, smiled scornfully, struck himself again on the breast, and slammed to the door.

They all looked at one another in silence.

"What does that mean?" Gavrilabegan. "He's locked himself in."

"Let him be, Gavrilav Andreitch," Stepan advised; "he'll do it if he's promised. He's like that, you know... If he makes a promise, it's a certain thing. He's not like us others in that. The truth's the truth with him. Yes, indeed."

"Yes," they all repeated, nodding their heads, "yes-that's so-yes."

Uncle Tail opened his window, and he too said, "Yes."

"Well, may be, we shall see," responded Gavrilav; "any way, we won't take off the guard. Here you, Eroshka!" he added, addressing a poor fellow in a yellow nankeen coat, who considered himself to be a gardener, "what have you to do? Take a stick and sit here, and if anything happens, run to me at once!"

Eroshkav took a stick, and sat down on the bottom stair. The crowd dispersed, all except a few inquisitive small boys, while Gavrilav went home and sent word through Liubov Liubimovna to the mistress that everything had been done, while he sent a postilion for a policeman in case of need. The old lady tied a knot in her handkerchief, sprinkled some eau-de-Colognev on it, sniffed at it, and rubbed her temples with it, drank some tea, and, being still under the influence of the cherrybay drops, fell asleep again.

An hour after all this hubbub the garret door opened, and Gerasim showed himself. He had on his best coat; he was leading Mumu by a string. Eroshkav moved aside and let him pass. Gerasim went to the gates. All the small boys in the yard stared at him in silence. He did not even turn round; he only put his cap on in the street. Gavrilav sent the same Eroshkav to follow him and keep watch on him as a spy. Eroshkav, seeing from a distance that he had gone into a cookshop with his dog, waited for him to come out again.

Gerasim was well known at the cookshop, and his signs were understood. He asked for cabbage soup with meat in it, and sat down with his arms on the table. Mumu stood beside his chair, looking calmly at him with her intelligent eyes. Her coat was glossy; one could see she had just been combed down. They brought Gerasim the soup. He crumbled some bread into it, cut the meat up small, and put the plate on the ground. Mumu began eating in her usual refined way, her little muzzle daintily held so as scarcely to touch her food.

Gerasim gazed a long while at her; two big tears suddenly rolled from his eyes; one fell on the dog's brow, the other into the soup. He shaded his face with his hand. Mumu ate up half the plateful, and came away from it, licking her lips. Gerasim got up, paid for the soup, and went out, followed by the rather perplexed glances of the waiter. Eroshka, seeing Gerasim, hid round a corner, and letting him get in front, followed him again.

Gerasim walked without haste, still holding Mumu by a string. When he got to the corner of the street, he stood still as though reflecting, and suddenly set off with rapid steps to the Crimean Ford. On the way he went into the yard of a house, where a lodge was being built, and carried away two bricks under his arm. At the Crimean Ford, he turned along the bank, went to a place where there were two little rowing-boats fastened to stakes (he had noticed them there before), and jumped into one of them with Mumu. A lame old man came out of a shed in the corner of a kitchen-garden and shouted after him; but Gerasim only nodded, and began rowing so vigorously, though against stream, that in an instant he had darted two hundred yards way. The old man stood for a while, scratched his back first with the left and then with the right hand, and went back hobbling to the shed.

Gerasim rowed on and on. Moscow was soon left behind. Meadows stretched each side of the bank, market gardens, fields, and copses; peasants' huts began to make their appearance. There was the fragrance of the country. He threw down his oars, bent his head down to Mumu, who was sitting facing him on a dry cross seat-the bottom of the boat was full of water-and stayed motionless, his mighty hands clasped upon her back, while the boat was gradually carried back by the current towards the town. At last Gerasim drew himself up hurriedly, with a sort of sick anger in his face, he tied up the bricks he had taken with string, made a running noose, put it round Mumu's neck, lifted her up over the river, and for the last time looked at her... She watched him confidingly and without any fear, faintly wagging her tail. He turned away, frowned, and wrung his hands... Gerasim heard nothing, neither the quick shrill whine of Mumu as she fell, nor the heavy splash of the water; for him the noisiest day was soundless and silent as even the stillest night is not silent to us. When he opened his eyes again, little wavelets were hurrying over the river, chasing one another; as before they broke against the boat's side, and only far away behind wide circles moved widening to the bank.

Directly Gerasim had vanished from Eroshka's sight, the latter returned home and reported what he had seen.

"Well, then," observed Stepan, "he'll drown her. Now we can feel easy about it. If he once promises a thing..."

No one saw Gerasim during the day. He did not have dinner at home.

Evening came on; they were all gathered together to supper, except him.

"What a strange creature that Gerasim is!" piped a fat laundrymaid; "fancy, upsetting himself like that over a dog... Upon my word!"

"But Gerasim has been here," Stepan cried all at once, scraping up his porridge with a spoon.

"How? when?"

"Why, a couple of hours ago. Yes, indeed! I ran against him at the gate; he was going out again from here; he was coming out of the yard. I tried to ask him about his dog, but he wasn't in the best of humors, I could see. Well, he gave me a shove; I suppose he only meant to put me out of his way, as if he'd say, 'Let me go, do!' but he fetched me such a crack on my neck, so seriously, that-oh! oh!" And Stepan, who could not help laughing, shrugged up and rubbed the back of his head. "Yes," he added; "he has got a fist; it's something like a fist, there's no denying that!"

They all laughed at Stepan, and after supper they separated to go to bed.

Meanwhile, at that very time, a gigantic figure with a bag on his shoulders and a stick in his hand, was eagerly and persistently stepping out along the T-high-road. It was Gerasim. He was hurrying on without looking round; hurrying homewards, to his own village, to his own country. After drowning poor Mumu, he had run back to his garret, hurriedly packed a few things together in an old horsecloth, tied it up in a bundle, tossed it on his shoulder, and so was ready. He had noticed the road carefully when he was brought to Moscow; the village his mistress had taken him from lay only about twenty miles off the high-road. He walked along it with a sort of invincible purpose, a desperate and at the same time joyous determination. He walked, his shoulders thrown back and his chest expanded; his eyes were fixed greedily straight before him. He hastened as though his old mother were waiting for him at home, as though she were calling him to her after long wanderings in strange parts, among strangers. The summer night, that was just drawing in, was still and warm; on one side, where the sun had set, the horizon was still light and faintly flushed with the last glow of the vanished day; on the other side a blue-gray twilight had already risen up. The night was coming up from that quarter. Quails were in hundreds around; corncrakes were calling to one another in the thickets... Gerasim could not hear them; he could not hear the

delicate night-whispering of the trees, by which his strong legs carried him, but he smelt the familiar scent of the ripening rye, which was wafted from the dark fields; he felt the wind, flying to meet him-the wind from home-beat caressingly upon his face, and play with his hair and his beard. He saw before him the whitening road homewards, straight as an arrow. He saw in the sky stars innumerable, lighting up his way, and stepped out, strong and bold as a lion, so that when the rising sun shed its moist rosy light upon the still fresh and unwearied traveller, already thirty miles lay between him and Moscow.

In a couple of days he was at home, in his little hut, to the great astonishment of the soldier's wife who had been put in there. After praying before the holy pictures, he set off at once to the village elder. The village elder was at first surprised; but the hay-cutting had just begun; Gerasim was a first-rate mower, and they put a scythe into his hand on the spot, and he went to mow in his old way, mowing so that the peasants were fairly astounded as they watched his wide sweeping strokes and the heaps he raked together...

In Moscow the day after Gerasim's flight they missed him. They went to his garret, rummaged about in it, and spoke to Gavril. He came, looked, shrugged his shoulders, and decided that the dumb man had either run away or had drowned himself with his stupid dog. They gave information to the police, and informed the lady. The old lady was furious, burst into tears, gave orders that he was to be found whatever happened, declared she had never ordered the dog to be destroyed, and, in fact, gave Gavril such a rating that he could do nothing all day but shake his head and murmur, "Well!" until Uncle Tail checked him at last, sympathetically echoing "We-ell!" At last the news came from the country of Gerasim's being there. The old lady was somewhat pacified; at first she issued a mandate for him to be brought back without delay to Moscow; afterwards, however, she declared that such an ungrateful creature was absolutely of no use to her. Soon after this she died herself; and her heirs had no thought to spare for Gerasim; they let their mother's other servants redeem their freedom on payment of an annual rent.

And Gerasim is living still, a lonely man in his lonely hut; he is strong and healthy as before, and does the work of four men as before, and as before is serious and steady. But his neighbors have observed that ever since his return from Moscow he has quite given up the society of women; he will not even look at them, and does not keep even a single dog.

"It's his good luck, though," the peasants reason, "that he can get on without female folk; and as for a dog-what need has he of a dog? you

wouldn't get a thief to go into his yard for any money!" Such is the fame of the dumb man's Titanic strength.

THE OUTRAGE

BY ALEKSANDR KUPRIN

It was five o'clock on a July afternoon. The heat was terrible. The whole of the huge stone-built town breathed out heat like a glowing furnace. The glare of the white-walled house was insufferable. The asphalt pavements grew soft and burned the feet. The shadows of the acacias spread over the cobbled road, pitiful and weary. They too seemed hot. The sea, pale in the sunlight, lay heavy and immobile as one dead. Over the streets hung a white dust.

In the foyer of one of the private theatres a small committee of local barristers who had undertaken to conduct the cases of those who had suffered in the last pogrom against the Jews was reaching the end of its daily task. There were nineteen of them, all juniors, young, progressive and conscientious men. The sitting was without formality, and white suits of duck, flannel and alpaca were in the majority. They sat anywhere, at little marble tables, and the chairman stood in front of an empty counter where chocolates were sold in the winter.

The barristers were quite exhausted by the heat which poured in through the windows, with the dazzling sunlight and the noise of the streets. The proceedings went lazily and with a certain irritation.

A tall young man with a fair moustache and thin hair was in the chair. He was dreaming voluptuously how he would be off in an instant on his new-bought bicycle to the bungalow. He would undress quickly, and without waiting to cool, still bathed in sweat, would fling himself into the clear, cold, sweet-smelling sea. His whole body was enervated and tense, thrilled by the thought. Impatiently moving the papers before him, he spoke in a drowsy voice.

"So, Joseph Moritzovich will conduct the case of Rubinchik... Perhaps there is still a statement to be made on the order of the day?"

His youngest colleague, a short, stout Karaite, very black and lively, said in a whisper so that every one could hear: "On the order of the day, the best thing would be iced *kvas*..."

The chairman gave him a stern side-glance, but could not restrain a smile. He sighed and put both his hands on the table to raise himself and declare the meeting closed, when the doorkeeper, who stood at the entrance to the theatre, suddenly moved forward and said: "There are seven people outside, sir. They want to come in."

The chairman looked impatiently round the company.

"What is to be done, gentlemen?"

Voices were heard.

"Next time. *Basta!*"

"Let 'em put it in writing."

"If they'll get it over quickly... Decide it at once."

"Let 'em go to the devil. Phew! It's like boiling pitch."

"Let them in." The chairman gave a sign with his head, annoyed. "Then bring me a Vichy, please. But it must be cold."

The porter opened the door and called down the corridor: "Come in. They say you may."

Then seven of the most surprising and unexpected individuals filed into the foyer. First appeared a full-grown, confident man in a smart suit, of the colour of dry sea-sand, in a magnificent pink shirt with white stripes and a crimson rose in his buttonhole. From the front his head looked like an upright bean, from the side like a horizontal bean. His face was adorned with a strong, bushy, martial moustache. He wore dark blue pince-nez on his nose, on his hands straw-coloured gloves. In his left hand he held a black walking-stick with a silver mount, in his right a light blue handkerchief.

The other six produced a strange, chaotic, incongruous impression, exactly as though they had all hastily pooled not merely their clothes, but their hands, feet and heads as well. There was a man with the splendid profile of a Roman senator, dressed in rags and tatters. Another wore an elegant dress waistcoat, from the deep opening of which a dirty Little-Russian shirt leapt to the eye. Here were the unbalanced faces of the criminal type, but looking with a confidence that nothing could shake. All these men, in spite of their apparent youth, evidently possessed a large experience of life, an easy manner, a bold approach, and some hidden, suspicious cunning.

The gentleman in the sandy suit bowed just his head, neatly and easily, and said with a half-question in his voice: "Mr. Chairman?"

"Yes. I am the chairman. What is your business?"

"We-all whom you see before you," the gentleman began in a quiet voice

and turned round to indicate his companions, “we come as delegates from the United Rostov-Kharkov-and-Odessa-Nikolayev Association of Thieves.”

The barristers began to shift in their seats.

The chairman flung himself back and opened his eyes wide. “Association of *what?*” he said, perplexed.

“The Association of Thieves,” the gentleman in the sandy suit coolly repeated. “As for myself, my comrades did me the signal honour of electing me as the spokesman of the deputation.”

“Very... pleased,” the chairman said uncertainly.

“Thank you. All seven of us are ordinary thieves-naturally of different departments. The Association has authorised us to put before your esteemed Committee”-the gentleman again made an elegant bow-“our respectful demand for assistance.”

“I don’t quite understand... quite frankly... what is the connection...” The chairman waved his hands helplessly. “However, please go on.”

“The matter about which we have the courage and the honour to apply to you, gentlemen, is very clear, very simple, and very brief. It will take only six or seven minutes. I consider it my duty to warn you of this beforehand, in view of the late hour and the 115 degrees that Fahrenheit marks in the shade.” The orator expectorated slightly and glanced at his superb gold watch. “You see, in the reports that have lately appeared in the local papers of the melancholy and terrible days of the last pogrom, there have very often been indications that among the instigators of the pogrom who were paid and organised by the police-the dregs of society, consisting of drunkards, tramps, souteneurs, and hooligans from the slums-thieves were also to be found. At first we were silent, but finally we considered ourselves under the necessity of protesting against such an unjust and serious accusation, before the face of the whole of intellectual society. I know well that in the eye of the law we are offenders and enemies of society. But imagine only for a moment, gentlemen, the situation of this enemy of society when he is accused wholesale of an offence which he not only never committed, but which he is ready to resist with the whole strength of his soul. It goes without saying that he will feel the outrage of such an injustice more keenly than a normal, average, fortunate citizen. Now, we declare that the accusation brought against us is utterly devoid of all basis, not merely of fact but even of logic. I intend to prove this in a few words if the honourable committee will kindly listen.”

“Proceed,” said the chairman.

“Please do... Please...” was heard from the barristers, now animated.

“I offer you my sincere thanks in the name of all my comrades. Believe me, you will never repent your attention to the representatives of our... well, let us say, slippery, but nevertheless difficult, profession. ‘So we begin,’ as Giraldoni sings in the prologue to *Pagliacci*.

“But first I would ask your permission, Mr. Chairman, to quench my thirst a little... Porter, bring me a lemonade and a glass of English bitter, there’s a good fellow. Gentlemen, I will not speak of the moral aspect of our profession nor of its social importance. Doubtless you know better than I the striking and brilliant paradox of Proudhon: *La propriete c’est le vol*-a paradox if you like, but one that has never yet been refuted by the sermons of cowardly bourgeois or fat priests. For instance: a father accumulates a million by energetic and clever exploitation, and leaves it to his son-a rickety, lazy, ignorant, degenerate idiot, a brainless maggot, a true parasite. Potentially a million rubles is a million working days, the absolutely irrational right to labour, sweat, life, and blood of a terrible number of men. Why? What is the ground of reason? Utterly unknown. Then why not agree with the proposition, gentlemen, that our profession is to some extent as it were a correction of the excessive accumulation of values in the hands of individuals, and serves as a protest against all the hardships, abominations, arbitrariness, violence, and negligence of the human personality, against all the monstrosities created by the bourgeois capitalistic organisation of modern society? Sooner or later, this order of things will assuredly be overturned by the social revolution. Property will pass away into the limbo of melancholy memories and with it, alas! we will disappear from the face of the earth, we, *les braves chevaliers d’industrie*.”

The orator paused to take the tray from the hands of the porter, and placed it near to his hand on the table.

“Excuse me, gentlemen... Here, my good man, take this,... and by the way, when you go out shut the door close behind you.”

“Very good, your Excellency!” the porter bawled in jest.

The orator drank off half a glass and continued: “However, let us leave aside the philosophical, social, and economic aspects of the question. I do not wish to fatigue your attention. I must nevertheless point out that our profession very closely approaches the idea of that which is called art. Into it enter all the elements which go to form art-vocation, inspiration, fantasy, inventiveness, ambition, and a long and arduous apprenticeship to the

science. From it is absent virtue alone, concerning which the great Karamzin wrote with such stupendous and fiery fascination. Gentlemen, nothing is further from my intention than to trifle with you and waste your precious time with idle paradoxes; but I cannot avoid expounding my idea briefly. To an outsider's ear it sounds absurdly wild and ridiculous to speak of the vocation of a thief. However, I venture to assure you that this vocation is a reality. There are men who possess a peculiarly strong visual memory, sharpness and accuracy of eye, presence of mind, dexterity of hand, and above all a subtle sense of touch, who are as it were born into God's world for the sole and special purpose of becoming distinguished card-sharpers. The pickpockets' profession demands extraordinary nimbleness and agility, a terrific certainty of movement, not to mention a ready wit, a talent for observation and strained attention. Some have a positive vocation for breaking open safes: from their tenderest childhood they are attracted by the mysteries of every kind of complicated mechanism-bicycles, sewing machines, clock-work toys and watches. Finally, gentlemen, there are people with an hereditary animus against private property. You may call this phenomenon degeneracy. But I tell you that you cannot entice a true thief, and thief by vocation, into the prose of honest vegetation by any gingerbread reward, or by the offer of a secure position, or by the gift of money, or by a woman's love: because there is here a permanent beauty of risk, a fascinating abyss of danger, the delightful sinking of the heart, the impetuous pulsation of life, the ecstasy! You are armed with the protection of the law, by locks, revolvers, telephones, police and soldiery; but we only by our own dexterity, cunning and fearlessness. We are the foxes, and society-is a chicken-run guarded by dogs. Are you aware that the most artistic and gifted natures in our villages become horse-thieves and poachers? What would you have? Life is so meagre, so insipid, so intolerably dull to eager and high-spirited souls!

"I pass on to inspiration. Gentlemen, doubtless you have had to read of thefts that were supernatural in design and execution. In the headlines of the newspapers they are called 'An Amazing Robbery,' or 'An Ingenious Swindle,' or again 'A Clever Ruse of the Gangsters.' In such cases our bourgeois paterfamilias waves his hands and exclaims: 'What a terrible thing! If only their abilities were turned to good-their inventiveness, their amazing knowledge of human psychology, their self-possession, their fearlessness, their incomparable histrionic powers! What extraordinary benefits they would bring to the country!' But it is well known that the bourgeois paterfamilias

was specially devised by Heaven to utter commonplaces and trivialities. I myself sometimes-we thieves are sentimental people, I confess-I myself sometimes admire a beautiful sunset in Aleksandra Park or by the sea-shore. And I am always certain beforehand that some one near me will say with infallible *aplomb*: 'Look at it. If it were put into picture no one would ever believe it!' I turn round and naturally I see a self-satisfied, full-fed paterfamilias, who delights in repeating some one else's silly statement as though it were his own. As for our dear country, the bourgeois paterfamilias looks upon it as though it were a roast turkey. If you've managed to cut the best part of the bird for yourself, eat it quietly in a comfortable corner and praise God. But he's not really the important person. I was led away by my detestation of vulgarity and I apologise for the digression. The real point is that genius and inspiration, even when they are not devoted to the service of the Orthodox Church, remain rare and beautiful things. Progress is a law-and theft too has its creation.

"Finally, our profession is by no means as easy and pleasant as it seems to the first glance. It demands long experience, constant practice, slow and painful apprenticeship. It comprises in itself hundreds of supple, skilful processes that the cleverest juggler cannot compass. That I may not give you only empty words, gentlemen, I will perform a few experiments before you now. I ask you to have every confidence in the demonstrators. We are all at present in the enjoyment of legal freedom, and though we are usually watched, and every one of us is known by face, and our photographs adorn the albums of all detective departments, for the time being we are not under the necessity of hiding ourselves from anybody. If any one of you should recognise any of us in the future under different circumstances, we ask you earnestly always to act in accordance with your professional duties and your obligations as citizens. In grateful return for your kind attention we have decided to declare your property inviolable, and to invest it with a thieves' taboo. However, I proceed to business."

The orator turned round and gave an order: "Sesoi the Great, will you come this way!"

An enormous fellow with a stoop, whose hands reached to his knees, without a forehead or a neck, like a big, fair Hercules, came forward. He grinned stupidly and rubbed his left eyebrow in his confusion.

"Can't do nothin' here," he said hoarsely.

The gentleman in the sandy suit spoke for him, turning to the committee.

“Gentlemen, before you stands a respected member of our association. His specialty is breaking open safes, iron strong boxes, and other receptacles for monetary tokens. In his night work he sometimes avails himself of the electric current of the lighting installation for fusing metals. Unfortunately he has nothing on which he can demonstrate the best items of his repertoire. He will open the most elaborate lock irreproachably... By the way, this door here, it’s locked, is it not?”

Every one turned to look at the door, on which a printed notice hung: “Stage Door. Strictly Private.”

“Yes, the door’s locked, evidently,” the chairman agreed.

“Admirable. Sesoi the Great, will you be so kind?”

“‘Tain’t nothin’ at all,” said the giant leisurely.

He went close to the door, shook it cautiously with his hand, took out of his pocket a small bright instrument, bent down to the keyhole, made some almost imperceptible movements with the tool, suddenly straightened and flung the door wide in silence. The chairman had his watch in his hands. The whole affair took only ten seconds.

“Thank you, Sesoi the Great,” said the gentleman in the sandy suit politely. “You may go back to your seat.”

But the chairman interrupted in some alarm: “Excuse me. This is all very interesting and instructive, but... is it included in your esteemed colleague’s profession to be able to lock the door again?”

“Ah, *mille pardons*.” The gentleman bowed hurriedly. “It slipped my mind. Sesoi the Great, would you oblige?”

The door was locked with the same adroitness and the same silence. The esteemed colleague waddled back to his friends, grinning.

“Now I will have the honour to show you the skill of one of our comrades who is in the line of picking pockets in theatres and railway-stations,” continued the orator. “He is still very young, but you may to some extent judge from the delicacy of his present work of the heights he will attain by diligence. Yasha!” A swarthy youth in a blue silk blouse and long glacé boots, like a gipsy, came forward with a swagger, fingering the tassels of his belt, and merrily screwing up his big, impudent black eyes with yellow whites.

“Gentlemen,” said the gentleman in the sandy suit persuasively, “I must ask if one of you would be kind enough to submit himself to a little experiment. I assure you this will be an exhibition only, just a game.”

He looked round over the seated company.

The short plump Karaite, black as a beetle, came forward from his table.

“At your service,” he said amusedly.

“Yasha!” The orator signed with his head.

Yasha came close to the solicitor. On his left arm, which was bent, hung a bright-coloured, figured scarf.

“Suppose yer in church or at the bar in one of the halls,-or watchin’ a circus,” he began in a sugary, fluent voice. “I see straight off-there’s a toff... Excuse me, sir. Suppose you’re the toff. There’s no offence-just means a rich gent, decent enough, but don’t know his way about. First-what’s he likely to have about ‘im? All sorts. Mostly, a ticker and a chain. Whereabouts does he keep ‘em? Somewhere in his top vest pocket-here. Others have ‘em in the bottom pocket. Just here. Purse-most always in the trousers, except when a greeny keeps it in his jacket. Cigar-case. Have a look first what it is-gold, silver-with a monogram. Leather-what decent man’d soil his hands? Cigar-case. Seven pockets: here, here, here, up there, there, here and here again. That’s right, ain’t it? That’s how you go to work.”

As he spoke the young man smiled. His eyes shone straight into the barrister’s. With a quick, dexterous movement of his right hand he pointed to various portions of his clothes.

“Then again you might see a pin here in the tie. However we do not appropriate. Such *gents* nowadays-they hardly ever wear a real stone. Then I comes up to him. I begin straight off to talk to him like a gent: ‘Sir, would you be so kind as to give me a light from your cigarette’-or something of the sort. At any rate, I enter into conversation. What’s next? I look him straight in the peepers, just like this. Only two of me fingers are at it-just this and this.” Yasha lifted two fingers of his right hand on a level with the solicitor’s face, the forefinger and the middle finger and moved them about.

“D’ you see? With these two fingers I run over the whole pianner. Nothin’ wonderful in it: one, two, three-ready. Any man who wasn’t stupid could learn easily. That’s all it is. Most ordinary business. I thank you.”

The pickpocket swung on his heel as if to return to his seat.

“Yasha!” The gentleman in the sandy suit said with meaning weight. “Yasha!” he repeated sternly.

Yasha stopped. His back was turned to the barrister, but he evidently gave his representative an imploring look, because the latter frowned and shook his head.

“Yasha!” he said for the third time, in a threatening tone.

“Huh!” The young thief grunted in vexation and turned to face the solicitor. “Where’s your little watch, sir?” he said in a piping voice.

“Oh!” the Karaite brought himself up sharp.

“You see-now you say ‘Oh!’” Yasha continued reproachfully. “All the while you were admiring me right hand, I was operatin’ yer watch with my left. Just with these two little fingers, under the scarf. That’s why we carry a scarf. Since your chain’s not worth anything-a present from some *mamselle* and the watch is a gold one, I’ve left you the chain as a keepsake. Take it,” he added with a sigh, holding out the watch.

“But... That is clever,” the barrister said in confusion. “I didn’t notice it at all.”

“That’s our business,” Yasha said with pride.

He swaggered back to his comrades. Meantime the orator took a drink from his glass and continued.

“Now, gentlemen, our next collaborator will give you an exhibition of some ordinary card tricks, which are worked at fairs, on steamboats and railways. With three cards, for instance, an ace, a queen, and a six, he can quite easily... But perhaps you are tired of these demonstrations, gentlemen.”...

“Not at all. It’s extremely interesting,” the chairman answered affably. “I should like to ask one question-that is if it is not too indiscreet-what is your own specialty?”

“Mine... H’m... No, how could it be an indiscretion?... I work the big diamond shops... and my other business is banks,” answered the orator with a modest smile. “Don’t think this occupation is easier than others. Enough that I know four European languages, German, French, English, and Italian, not to mention Polish, Ukrainian and Yiddish. But shall I show you some more experiments, Mr. Chairman?”

The chairman looked at his watch.

“Unfortunately the time is too short,” he said. “Wouldn’t it be better to pass on to the substance of your business? Besides, the experiments we have just seen have amply convinced us of the talent of your esteemed associates... Am I not right, Isaac Abramovich?”

“Yes, yes... absolutely,” the Karaite barrister readily confirmed.

“Admirable,” the gentleman in the sandy suit kindly agreed. “My dear Count”-he turned to a blond, curly-haired man, with a face like a billiard-

maker on a bank-holiday-“put your instruments away. They will not be wanted. I have only a few words more to say, gentlemen. Now that you have convinced yourselves that our art, although it does not enjoy the patronage of high-placed individuals, is nevertheless an art; and you have probably come to my opinion that this art is one which demands many personal qualities besides constant labour, danger, and unpleasant misunderstandings-you will also, I hope, believe that it is possible to become attached to its practice and to love and esteem it, however strange that may appear at first sight. Picture to yourselves that a famous poet of talent, whose tales and poems adorn the pages of our best magazines, is suddenly offered the chance of writing verses at a penny a line, signed into the bargain, as an advertisement for ‘Cigarettes Jasmine’-or that a slander was spread about one of you distinguished barristers, accusing you of making a business of concocting evidence for divorce cases, or of writing petitions from the cabmen to the governor in public-houses! Certainly your relatives, friends and acquaintances wouldn’t believe it. But the rumour has already done its poisonous work, and you have to live through minutes of torture. Now picture to yourselves that such a disgraceful and vexatious slander, started by God knows whom, begins to threaten not only your good name and your quiet digestion, but your freedom, your health, and even your life!

“This is the position of us thieves, now being slandered by the newspapers. I must explain. There is in existence a class of scum-*passez-moi le mot*-whom we call their ‘Mothers’ Darlings.’ With these we are unfortunately confused. They have neither shame nor conscience, a dissipated riff-raff, mothers’ useless darlings, idle, clumsy drones, shop assistants who commit unskilful thefts. He thinks nothing of living on his mistress, a prostitute, like the male mackerel, who always swims after the female and lives on her excrements. He is capable of robbing a child with violence in a dark alley, in order to get a penny; he will kill a man in his sleep and torture an old woman. These men are the pests of our profession. For them the beauties and the traditions of the art have no existence. They watch us real, talented thieves like a pack of jackals after a lion. Suppose I’ve managed to bring off an important job-we won’t mention the fact that I have to leave two-thirds of what I get to the receivers who sell the goods and discount the notes, or the customary subsidies to our incorruptible police-I still have to share out something to each one of these parasites, who have got wind of my job, by accident, hearsay, or a casual glance.

“So we call them *Motients*, which means ‘half,’ a corruption of *moitié*... Original etymology. I pay him only because he knows and may inform against me. And it mostly happens that even when he’s got his share he runs off to the police in order to get another dollar. We, honest thieves... Yes, you may laugh, gentlemen, but I repeat it: we honest thieves detest these reptiles. We have another name for them, a stigma of ignominy; but I dare not utter it here out of respect for the place and for my audience. Oh, yes, they would gladly accept an invitation to a pogrom. The thought that we may be confused with them is a hundred times more insulting to us even than the accusation of taking part in a pogrom.

“Gentlemen! While I have been speaking I have often noticed smiles on your faces. I understand you. Our presence here, our application for your assistance, and above all the unexpectedness of such a phenomenon as a systematic organisation of thieves, with delegates who are thieves, and a leader of the deputation, also a thief by profession-it is all so original that it must inevitably arouse a smile. But now I will speak from the depth of my heart. Let us be rid of our outward wrappings, gentlemen, let us speak as men to men.

“Almost all of us are educated, and all love books. We don’t only read the adventures of Roqueambole, as the realistic writers say of us. Do you think our hearts did not bleed and our cheeks did not burn from shame, as though we had been slapped in the face, all the time that this unfortunate, disgraceful, accursed, cowardly war lasted. Do you really think that our souls do not flame with anger when our country is lashed with Cossack-whips, and trodden under foot, shot and spit at by mad, exasperated men? Will you not believe that we thieves meet every step towards the liberation to come with a thrill of ecstasy?

“We understand, every one of us-perhaps only a little less than you barristers, gentlemen-the real sense of the pogroms. Every time that some dastardly event or some ignominious failure has occurred, after executing a martyr in a dark corner of a fortress, or after deceiving public confidence, some one who is hidden and unapproachable gets frightened of the people’s anger and diverts its vicious element upon the heads of innocent Jews. Whose diabolical mind invents these pogroms-these titanic blood-lettings, these cannibal amusements for the dark, bestial souls?

“We all see with certain clearness that the last convulsions of the bureaucracy are at hand. Forgive me if I present it imaginatively. There was a

people that had a chief temple, wherein dwelt a bloodthirsty deity, behind a curtain, guarded by priests. Once fearless hands tore the curtain away. Then all the people saw, instead of a god, a huge, shaggy, voracious spider, like a loathsome cuttlefish. They beat it and shoot at it: it is dismembered already; but still in the frenzy of its final agony it stretches over all the ancient temple its disgusting, clawing tentacles. And the priests, themselves under sentence of death, push into the monster's grasp all whom they can seize in their terrified, trembling fingers.

"Forgive me. What I have said is probably wild and incoherent. But I am somewhat agitated. Forgive me. I continue. We thieves by profession know better than any one else how these pogroms were organised. We wander everywhere: into public houses, markets, tea-shops, doss-houses, public places, the harbour. We can swear before God and man and posterity that we have seen how the police organise the massacres, without shame and almost without concealment. We know them all by face, in uniform or disguise. They invited many of us to take part; but there was none so vile among us as to give even the outward consent that fear might have extorted.

"You know, of course, how the various strata of Russian society behave towards the police? It is not even respected by those who avail themselves of its dark services. But we despise and hate it three, ten times more-not because many of us have been tortured in the detective departments, which are just chambers of horror, beaten almost to death, beaten with whips of ox-hide and of rubber in order to extort a confession or to make us betray a comrade. Yes, we hate them for that too. But we thieves, all of us who have been in prison, have a mad passion for freedom. Therefore we despise our gaolers with all the hatred that a human heart can feel. I will speak for myself. I have been tortured three times by police detectives till I was half dead. My lungs and liver have been shattered. In the mornings I spit blood until I can breathe no more. But if I were told that I will be spared a fourth flogging only by shaking hands with a chief of the detective police, I would refuse to do it!

"And then the newspapers say that we took from these hands Judas-money, dripping with human blood. No, gentlemen, it is a slander which stabs our very soul, and inflicts insufferable pain. Not money, nor threats, nor promises will suffice to make us mercenary murderers of our brethren, nor accomplices with them."

"Never... No... No..., " his comrades standing behind him began to murmur.

“I will say more,” the thief continued. “Many of us protected the victims during this pogrom. Our friend, called Sesoï the Great-you have just seen him, gentlemen-was then lodging with a Jewish braid-maker on the Moldavanka. With a poker in his hands he defended his landlord from a great horde of assassins. It is true, Sesoï the Great is a man of enormous physical strength, and this is well known to many of the inhabitants of the Moldavanka. But you must agree, gentlemen, that in these moments Sesoï the Great looked straight into the face of death. Our comrade Martin the Miner-this gentleman here” -the orator pointed to a pale, bearded man with beautiful eyes who was holding himself in the background-“saved an old Jewess, whom he had never seen before, who was being pursued by a crowd of these *canaille*. They broke his head with a crowbar for his pains, smashed his arm in two places and splintered a rib. He is only just out of hospital. That is the way our most ardent and determined members acted. The others trembled for anger and wept for their own impotence.

“None of us will forget the horrors of those bloody days and bloody nights lit up by the glare of fires, those sobbing women, those little children’s bodies torn to pieces and left lying in the street. But for all that not one of us thinks that the police and the mob are the real origin of the evil. These tiny, stupid, loathsome vermin are only a senseless fist that is governed by a vile, calculating mind, moved by a diabolical will.

“Yes, gentlemen,” the orator continued, “we thieves have nevertheless merited your legal contempt. But when you, noble gentlemen, need the help of clever, brave, obedient men at the barricades, men who will be ready to meet death with a song and a jest on their lips for the most glorious word in the world-Freedom-will you cast us off then and order us away because of an inveterate revulsion? Damn it all, the first victim in the French Revolution was a prostitute. She jumped up on to a barricade, with her skirt caught elegantly up into her hand and called out: ‘Which of you soldiers will dare to shoot a woman?’ Yes, by God.” The orator exclaimed aloud and brought down his fist on to the marble table top: “They killed her, but her action was magnificent, and the beauty of her words immortal.

“If you should drive us away on the great day, we will turn to you and say: ‘You spotless Cherubim-if human thoughts had the power to wound, kill, and rob man of honour and property, then which of you innocent doves would not deserve the knout and imprisonment for life?’ Then we will go away from you and build our own gay, sporting, desperate thieves’ barricade,

and will die with such united songs on our lips that you will envy us, you who are whiter than snow!

“But I have been once more carried away. Forgive me. I am at the end. You now see, gentlemen, what feelings the newspaper slanders have excited in us. Believe in our sincerity and do what you can to remove the filthy stain which has so unjustly been cast upon us. I have finished.”

He went away from the table and joined his comrades. The barristers were whispering in an undertone, very much as the magistrates of the bench at sessions. Then the chairman rose.

“We trust you absolutely, and we will make every effort to clear your association of this most grievous charge. At the same time my colleagues have authorised me, gentlemen, to convey to you their deep respect for your passionate feelings as citizens. And for my own part I ask the leader of the deputation for permission to shake him by the hand.”

The two men, both tall and serious, held each other's hands in a strong, masculine grip.

The barristers were leaving the theatre; but four of them hung back a little beside the clothes rack in the hall. Isaac Abramovich could not find his new, smart grey hat anywhere. In its place on the wooden peg hung a cloth cap jauntily flattened in on either side.

“Yasha!” The stern voice of the orator was suddenly heard from the other side of the door. “Yasha! It's the last time I'll speak to you, curse you!... Do you hear?” The heavy door opened wide. The gentleman in the sandy suit entered. In his hands he held Isaac Abramovich's hat; on his face was a well-bred smile.

“Gentlemen, for Heaven's sake forgive us-an odd little misunderstanding. One of our comrades exchanged his hat by accident... Oh, it is yours! A thousand pardons. Doorkeeper! Why don't you keep an eye on things, my good fellow, eh? Just give me that cap, there. Once more, I ask you to forgive me, gentlemen.”

With a pleasant bow and the same well-bred smile he made his way quickly into the street.

THE QUEEN OF SPADES
BY ALEXSANDR PUSHKIN

I

There was a card party at the rooms of Narumov of the Horse Guards. The long winter night passed away imperceptibly, and it was five o'clock in the morning before the company sat down to supper. Those who had won, ate with a good appetite; the others sat staring absently at their empty plates. When the champagne appeared, however, the conversation became more animated, and all took a part in it.

"And how did you fare, Surin?" asked the host.

"Oh, I lost, as usual. I must confess that I am unlucky: I play mirandole, I always keep cool, I never allow anything to put me out, and yet I always lose!"

"And you did not once allow yourself to be tempted to back the red?... Your firmness astonishes me."

"But what do you think of Hermann?" said one of the guests, pointing to a young Engineer: "he has never had a card in his hand in his life, he has never in his life laid a wager, and yet he sits here till five o'clock in the morning watching our play."

"Play interests me very much," said Hermann: "but I am not in the position to sacrifice the necessary in the hope of winning the superfluous."

"Hermann is a German: he is economical-that is all!" observed Tomsy. "But if there is one person that I cannot understand, it is my grandmother, the Countess Anna Fedotovna."

"How so?" inquired the guests.

"I cannot understand," continued Tomsy, "how it is that my grandmother does not punt."

"What is there remarkable about an old lady of eighty not punting?" said Narumov.

"Then you do not know the reason why?"

"No, really; haven't the faintest idea."

"Oh! then listen. About sixty years ago, my grandmother went to Paris, where she created quite a sensation. People used to run after her to catch a glimpse of the 'Muscovite Venus.' Richelieu made love to her, and my grandmother maintains that he almost blew out his brains in consequence of her cruelty. At that time ladies used to play at faro. On one occasion at the Court, she lost a very considerable sum to the Duke of Orleans. On returning

home, my grandmother removed the patches from her face, took off her hoops, informed my grandfather of her loss at the gaming-table, and ordered him to pay the money. My deceased grandfather, as far as I remember, was a sort of house-steward to my grandmother. He dreaded her like fire; but, on hearing of such a heavy loss, he almost went out of his mind; he calculated the various sums she had lost, and pointed out to her that in six months she had spent half a million francs, that neither their Moscow nor Saratov estates were in Paris, and finally refused point blank to pay the debt. My grandmother gave him a box on the ear and slept by herself as a sign of her displeasure. The next day she sent for her husband, hoping that this domestic punishment had produced an effect upon him, but she found him inflexible. For the first time in her life, she entered into reasonings and explanations with him, thinking to be able to convince him by pointing out to him that there are debts and debts, and that there is a great difference between a Prince and a coachmaker. But it was all in vain, my grandfather still remained obdurate. But the matter did not rest there. My grandmother did not know what to do. She had shortly before become acquainted with a very remarkable man. You have heard of Count St. Germain, about whom so many marvellous stories are told. You know that he represented himself as the Wandering Jew, as the discoverer of the elixir of life, of the philosopher's stone, and so forth. Some laughed at him as a charlatan; but Casanova, in his memoirs, says that he was a spy. But be that as it may, St. Germain, in spite of the mystery surrounding him, was a very fascinating person, and was much sought after in the best circles of society. Even to this day my grandmother retains an affectionate recollection of him, and becomes quite angry if any one speaks disrespectfully of him. My grandmother knew that St. Germain had large sums of money at his disposal. She resolved to have recourse to him, and she wrote a letter to him asking him to come to her without delay. The queer old man immediately waited upon her and found her overwhelmed with grief. She described to him in the blackest colours the barbarity of her husband, and ended by declaring that her whole hope depended upon his friendship and amiability.

“St. Germain reflected.

“‘I could advance you the sum you want,’ said he; ‘but I know that you would not rest easy until you had paid me back, and I should not like to bring fresh troubles upon you. But there is another way of getting out of your difficulty: you can win back your money.’

“‘But, my dear Count,’ replied my grandmother, ‘I tell you that I haven’t any money left.’

“‘Money is not necessary,’ replied St. Germain: ‘be pleased to listen to me.’

“Then he revealed to her a secret, for which each of us would give a good deal...”

The young officers listened with increased attention. Tomsky lit his pipe, puffed away for a moment and then continued:

“That same evening my grandmother went to Versailles to the *jeu de la reine*. The Duke of Orleans kept the bank; my grandmother excused herself in an off-hand manner for not having yet paid her debt, by inventing some little story, and then began to play against him. She chose three cards and played them one after the other: all three won *sonika*, [Said of a card when it wins or loses in the quickest possible time.] and my grandmother recovered every farthing that she had lost.”

“Mere chance!” said one of the guests.

“A tale!” observed Hermann.

“Perhaps they were marked cards!” said a third.

“I do not think so,” replied Tomsky gravely.

“What!” said Narumov, “you have a grandmother who knows how to hit upon three lucky cards in succession, and you have never yet succeeded in getting the secret of it out of her?”

“That’s the deuce of it!” replied Tomsky: “she had four sons, one of whom was my father; all four were determined gamblers, and yet not to one of them did she ever reveal her secret, although it would not have been a bad thing either for them or for me. But this is what I heard from my uncle, Count Ivan Ilyich, and he assured me, on his honour, that it was true. The late Chaplitzky-the same who died in poverty after having squandered millions-once lost, in his youth, about three hundred thousand roubles-to Zorich, if I remember rightly. He was in despair. My grandmother, who was always very severe upon the extravagance of young men, took pity, however, upon Chaplitzky. She gave him three cards, telling him to play them one after the other, at the same time exacting from him a solemn promise that he would never play at cards again as long as he lived. Chaplitzky then went to his victorious opponent, and they began a fresh game. On the first card he staked fifty thousand rubles and won *sonika*; he doubled the stake and won again, till at last, by pursuing the same tactics, he won back more than he had lost...”

“But it is time to go to bed: it is a quarter to six already.”

And indeed it was already beginning to dawn: the young men emptied their glasses and then took leave of each other.

II

The old Countess A- was seated in her dressing-room in front of her looking-glass. Three waiting maids stood around her. One held a small pot of rouge, another a box of hair-pins, and the third a tall can with bright red ribbons. The Countess had no longer the slightest pretensions to beauty, but she still preserved the habits of her youth, dressed in strict accordance with the fashion of seventy years before, and made as long and as careful a toilette as she would have done sixty years previously. Near the window, at an embroidery frame, sat a young lady, her ward.

“Good morning, grandmamma,” said a young officer, entering the room. “*Bonjour, Mademoiselle Lise*. Grandmamma, I want to ask you something.”

“What is it, Paul?”

“I want you to let me introduce one of my friends to you, and to allow me to bring him to the ball on Friday.”

“Bring him direct to the ball and introduce him to me there. Were you at B-’s yesterday?”

“Yes; everything went off very pleasantly, and dancing was kept up until five o’clock. How charming Yeletzkaya was!”

“But, my dear, what is there charming about her? Isn’t she like her grandmother, the Princess Daria Petrovna? By the way, she must be very old, the Princess Daria Petrovna.”

“How do you mean, old?” cried Tomsky thoughtlessly; “she died seven years ago.”

The young lady raised her head and made a sign to the young officer. He then remembered that the old Countess was never to be informed of the death of any of her contemporaries, and he bit his lips. But the old Countess heard the news with the greatest indifference.

“Dead!” said she; “and I did not know it. We were appointed maids of honour at the same time, and when we were presented to the Empress...”

And the Countess for the hundredth time related to her grandson one of her anecdotes.

“Come, Paul,” said she, when she had finished her story, “help me to get up. Lizanka, where is my snuff-box?”

And the Countess with her three maids went behind a screen to finish her toilette. Tomsky was left alone with the young lady.

“Who is the gentleman you wish to introduce to the Countess?” asked Lizaveta Ivanovna in a whisper.

“Narumov. Do you know him?”

“No. Is he a soldier or a civilian?”

“A soldier.”

“Is he in the Engineers?”

“No, in the Cavalry. What made you think that he was in the Engineers?”

The young lady smiled, but made no reply.

“Paul,” cried the Countess from behind the screen, “send me some new novel, only pray don’t let it be one of the present day style.”

“What do you mean, grandmother?”

“That is, a novel, in which the hero strangles neither his father nor his mother, and in which there are no drowned bodies. I have a great horror of drowned persons.”

“There are no such novels nowadays. Would you like a Russian one?”

“Are there any Russian novels? Send me one, my dear, pray send me one!”

“Good-bye, grandmother: I am in a hurry... Good-bye, Lizaveta Ivanovna. What made you think that Narumov was in the Engineers?”

And Tomsky left the boudoir.

Lizaveta Ivanovna was left alone: she laid aside her work and began to look out of the window. A few moments afterwards, at a corner house on the other side of the street, a young officer appeared. A deep blush covered her cheeks; she took up her work again and bent her head down over the frame. At the same moment the Countess returned completely dressed.

“Order the carriage, Lizaveta,” said she; “we will go out for a drive.”

Lizaveta arose from the frame and began to arrange her work.

“What is the matter with you, my child, are you deaf?” cried the Countess. “Order the carriage to be got ready at once.”

“I will do so this moment,” replied the young lady, hastening into the ante-room.

A servant entered and gave the Countess some books from Prince Paul Aleksandrovich.

“Tell him that I am much obliged to him,” said the Countess. “Lizaveta! Lizaveta! Where are you running to?”

“I am going to dress.”

“There is plenty of time, my dear. Sit down here. Open the first volume

and read to me aloud.”

Her companion took the book and read a few lines.

“Louder,” said the Countess. “What is the matter with you, my child? Have you lost your voice? Wait-give me that footstool-a little nearer-that will do.”

Lizaveta read two more pages. The Countess yawned.

“Put the book down,” said she: “what a lot of nonsense! Send it back to Prince Paul with my thanks... But where is the carriage?”

“The carriage is ready,” said Lizaveta, looking out into the street.

“How is it that you are not dressed?” said the Countess: “I must always wait for you. It is intolerable, my dear!”

Liza hastened to her room. She had not been there two minutes, before the Countess began to ring with all her might. The three waiting-maids came running in at one door and the valet at another.

“How is it that you cannot hear me when I ring for you?” said the Countess. “Tell Lizaveta Ivanovna that I am waiting for her.”

Lizaveta returned with her hat and cloak on.

“At last you are here!” said the Countess. “But why such an elaborate toilette? Whom do you intend to captivate? What sort of weather is it? It seems rather windy.”

“No, your Ladyship, it is very calm,” replied the valet.

“You never think of what you are talking about. Open the window. So it is: windy and bitterly cold. Unharness the horses. Lizaveta, we won’t go out-there was no need for you to deck yourself like that.”

“What a life is mine!” thought Lizaveta Ivanovna.

And, in truth, Lizaveta Ivanovna was a very unfortunate creature. “The bread of the stranger is bitter,” says Dante, “and his staircase hard to climb.” But who can know what the bitterness of dependence is so well as the poor companion of an old lady of quality? The Countess A- had by no means a bad heart, but she was capricious, like a woman who had been spoilt by the world, as well as being avaricious and egotistical, like all old people who have seen their best days, and whose thoughts are with the past and not the present. She participated in all the vanities of the great world, went to balls, where she sat in a corner, painted and dressed in old-fashioned style, like a deformed but indispensable ornament of the ball-room; all the guests on entering approached her and made a profound bow, as if in accordance with a set ceremony, but after that nobody took any further notice of her. She

received the whole town at her house, and observed the strictest etiquette, although she could no longer recognise the faces of people. Her numerous domestics, growing fat and old in her ante-chamber and servants' hall, did just as they liked, and vied with each other in robbing the aged Countess in the most bare-faced manner. Lizaveta Ivanovna was the martyr of the household. She made tea, and was reproached with using too much sugar; she read novels aloud to the Countess, and the faults of the author were visited upon her head; she accompanied the Countess in her walks, and was held answerable for the weather or the state of the pavement. A salary was attached to the post, but she very rarely received it, although she was expected to dress like everybody else, that is to say, like very few indeed. In society she played the most pitiable role. Everybody knew her, and nobody paid her any attention. At balls she danced only when a partner was wanted, and ladies would only take hold of her arm when it was necessary to lead her out of the room to attend to their dresses. She was very self-conscious, and felt her position keenly, and she looked about her with impatience for a deliverer to come to her rescue; but the young men, calculating in their giddiness, honoured her with but very little attention, although Lizaveta Ivanovna was a hundred times prettier than the bare-faced and cold-hearted marriageable girls around whom they hovered. Many a time did she quietly slink away from the glittering but wearisome drawing-room, to go and cry in her own poor little room, in which stood a screen, a chest of drawers, a looking-glass and a painted bedstead, and where a tallow candle burnt feebly in a copper candle-stick.

One morning-this was about two days after the evening party described at the beginning of this story, and a week previous to the scene at which we have just assisted-Lizaveta Ivanovna was seated near the window at her embroidery frame, when, happening to look out into the street, she caught sight of a young Engineer officer, standing motionless with his eyes fixed upon her window. She lowered her head and went on again with her work. About five minutes afterwards she looked out again-the young officer was still standing in the same place. Not being in the habit of coquetting with passing officers, she did not continue to gaze out into the street, but went on sewing for a couple of hours, without raising her head. Dinner was announced. She rose up and began to put her embroidery away, but glancing casually out of the window, she perceived the officer again. This seemed to her very strange. After dinner she went to the window with a certain feeling

of uneasiness, but the officer was no longer there-and she thought no more about him.

A couple of days afterwards, just as she was stepping into the carriage with the Countess, she saw him again. He was standing close behind the door, with his face half-concealed by his fur collar, but his dark eyes sparkled beneath his cap. Lizaveta felt alarmed, though she knew not why, and she trembled as she seated herself in the carriage.

On returning home, she hastened to the window-the officer was standing in his accustomed place, with his eyes fixed upon her. She drew back, a prey to curiosity and agitated by a feeling which was quite new to her.

From that time forward not a day passed without the young officer making his appearance under the window at the customary hour, and between him and her there was established a sort of mute acquaintance. Sitting in her place at work, she used to feel his approach; and raising her head, she would look at him longer and longer each day. The young man seemed to be very grateful to her: she saw with the sharp eye of youth, how a sudden flush covered his pale cheeks each time that their glances met. After about a week she commenced to smile at him...

When Tomsy asked permission of his grandmother the Countess to present one of his friends to her, the young girl's heart beat violently. But hearing that Narumov was not an Engineer, she regretted that by her thoughtless question, she had betrayed her secret to the volatile Tomsy.

Hermann was the son of a German who had become a naturalised Russian, and from whom he had inherited a small capital. Being firmly convinced of the necessity of preserving his independence, Hermann did not touch his private income, but lived on his pay, without allowing himself the slightest luxury. Moreover, he was reserved and ambitious, and his companions rarely had an opportunity of making merry at the expense of his extreme parsimony. He had strong passions and an ardent imagination, but his firmness of disposition preserved him from the ordinary errors of young men. Thus, though a gamester at heart, he never touched a card, for he considered his position did not allow him-as he said-"to risk the necessary in the hope of winning the superfluous," yet he would sit for nights together at the card table and follow with feverish anxiety the different turns of the game.

The story of the three cards had produced a powerful impression upon his imagination, and all night long he could think of nothing else. "If," he

thought to himself the following evening, as he walked along the streets of St. Petersburg, "if the old Countess would but reveal her secret to me! if she would only tell me the names of the three winning cards. Why should I not try my fortune? I must get introduced to her and win her favour-become her lover... But all that will take time, and she is eighty-seven years old: she might be dead in a week, in a couple of days even!... But the story itself: can it really be true?... No! Economy, temperance and industry: those are my three winning cards; by means of them I shall be able to double my capital-increase it sevenfold, and procure for myself ease and independence."

Musing in this manner, he walked on until he found himself in one of the principal streets of St. Petersburg, in front of a house of antiquated architecture. The street was blocked with equipages; carriages one after the other drew up in front of the brilliantly illuminated doorway. At one moment there stepped out on to the pavement the well-shaped little foot of some young beauty, at another the heavy boot of a cavalry officer, and then the silk stockings and shoes of a member of the diplomatic world. Furs and cloaks passed in rapid succession before the gigantic porter at the entrance.

Hermann stopped. "Whose house is this?" he asked of the watchman at the corner.

"The Countess A-'s," replied the watchman.

Hermann started. The strange story of the three cards again presented itself to his imagination. He began walking up and down before the house, thinking of its owner and her strange secret. Returning late to his modest lodging, he could not go to sleep for a long time, and when at last he did doze off, he could dream of nothing but cards, green tables, piles of banknotes and heaps of ducats. He played one card after the other, winning uninterruptedly, and then he gathered up the gold and filled his pockets with the notes. When he woke up late the next morning, he sighed over the loss of his imaginary wealth, and then sallying out into the town, he found himself once more in front of the Countess's residence. Some unknown power seemed to have attracted him thither. He stopped and looked up at the windows. At one of these he saw a head with luxuriant black hair, which was bent down probably over some book or an embroidery frame. The head was raised. Hermann saw a fresh complexion and a pair of dark eyes. That moment decided his fate.

III

Lizaveta Ivanovna had scarcely taken off her hat and cloak, when the Countess sent for her and again ordered her to get the carriage ready. The vehicle drew up before the door, and they prepared to take their seats. Just at the moment when two footmen were assisting the old lady to enter the carriage, Lizaveta saw her Engineer standing close beside the wheel; he grasped her hand; alarm caused her to lose her presence of mind, and the young man disappeared-but not before he had left a letter between her fingers. She concealed it in her glove, and during the whole of the drive she neither saw nor heard anything. It was the custom of the Countess, when out for an airing in her carriage, to be constantly asking such questions as: "Who was that person that met us just now? What is the name of this bridge? What is written on that signboard?" On this occasion, however, Lizaveta returned such vague and absurd answers, that the Countess became angry with her.

"What is the matter with you, my dear?" she exclaimed. "Have you taken leave of your senses, or what is it? Do you not hear me or understand what I say?... Heaven be thanked, I am still in my right mind and speak plainly enough!"

Lizaveta Ivanovna did not hear her. On returning home she ran to her room, and drew the letter out of her glove: it was not sealed. Lizaveta read it. The letter contained a declaration of love; it was tender, respectful, and copied word for word from a German novel. But Lizaveta did not know anything of the German language, and she was quite delighted.

For all that, the letter caused her to feel exceedingly uneasy. For the first time in her life she was entering into secret and confidential relations with a young man. His boldness alarmed her. She reproached herself for her imprudent behaviour, and knew not what to do. Should she cease to sit at the window and, by assuming an appearance of indifference towards him, put a check upon the young officer's desire for further acquaintance with her? Should she send his letter back to him, or should she answer him in a cold and decided manner? There was nobody to whom she could turn in her perplexity, for she had neither female friend nor adviser... At length she resolved to reply to him.

She sat down at her little writing-table, took pen and paper, and began to think. Several times she began her letter, and then tore it up: the way she had

expressed herself seemed to her either too inviting or too cold and decisive. At last she succeeded in writing a few lines with which she felt satisfied.

“I am convinced,” she wrote, “that your intentions are honourable, and that you do not wish to offend me by any imprudent behaviour, but our acquaintance must not begin in such a manner. I return you your letter, and I hope that I shall never have any cause to complain of this undeserved slight.”

The next day, as soon as Hermann made his appearance, Lizaveta rose from her embroidery, went into the drawing-room, opened the ventilator and threw the letter into the street, trusting that the young officer would have the perception to pick it up.

Hermann hastened forward, picked it up and then repaired to a confectioner’s shop. Breaking the seal of the envelope, he found inside it his own letter and Lizaveta’s reply. He had expected this, and he returned home, his mind deeply occupied with his intrigue.

Three days afterwards, a bright-eyed young girl from a milliner’s establishment brought Lizaveta a letter. Lizaveta opened it with great uneasiness, fearing that it was a demand for money, when suddenly she recognised Hermann’s hand-writing.

“You have made a mistake, my dear,” said she: “this letter is not for me.”

“Oh, yes, it is for you,” replied the girl, smiling very knowingly. “Have the goodness to read it.”

Lizaveta glanced at the letter. Hermann requested an interview.

“It cannot be,” she cried, alarmed at the audacious request, and the manner in which it was made. “This letter is certainly not for me.”

And she tore it into fragments.

“If the letter was not for you, why have you torn it up?” said the girl. “I should have given it back to the person who sent it.”

“Be good enough, my dear,” said Lizaveta, disconcerted by this remark, “not to bring me any more letters for the future, and tell the person who sent you that he ought to be ashamed...”

But Hermann was not the man to be thus put off. Every day Lizaveta received from him a letter, sent now in this way, now in that. They were no longer translated from the German. Hermann wrote them under the inspiration of passion, and spoke in his own language, and they bore full testimony to the inflexibility of his desire and the disordered condition of his uncontrollable imagination. Lizaveta no longer thought of sending them back to him: she became intoxicated with them and began to reply to them, and

little by little her answers became longer and more affectionate. At last she threw out of the window to him the following letter:

“This evening there is going to be a ball at the Embassy. The Countess will be there. We shall remain until two o’clock. You have now an opportunity of seeing me alone. As soon as the Countess is gone, the servants will very probably go out, and there will be nobody left but the Swiss, but he usually goes to sleep in his lodge. Come about half-past eleven. Walk straight upstairs. If you meet anybody in the ante-room, ask if the Countess is at home. You will be told ‘No,’ in which case there will be nothing left for you to do but to go away again. But it is most probable that you will meet nobody. The maidservants will all be together in one room. On leaving the ante-room, turn to the left, and walk straight on until you reach the Countess’s bedroom. In the bedroom, behind a screen, you will find two doors: the one on the right leads to a cabinet, which the Countess never enters; the one on the left leads to a corridor, at the end of which is a little winding staircase; this leads to my room.”

Hermann trembled like a tiger, as he waited for the appointed time to arrive. At ten o’clock in the evening he was already in front of the Countess’s house. The weather was terrible; the wind blew with great violence; the sleety snow fell in large flakes; the lamps emitted a feeble light, the streets were deserted; from time to time a sledge, drawn by a sorry-looking hack, passed by, on the look-out for a belated passenger. Hermann was enveloped in a thick overcoat, and felt neither wind nor snow.

At last the Countess’s carriage drew up. Hermann saw two footmen carry out in their arms the bent form of the old lady, wrapped in sable fur, and immediately behind her, clad in a warm mantle, and with her head ornamented with a wreath of fresh flowers, followed Lizaveta. The door was closed. The carriage rolled away heavily through the yielding snow. The porter shut the street-door; the windows became dark.

Hermann began walking up and down near the deserted house; at length he stopped under a lamp, and glanced at his watch: it was twenty minutes past eleven. He remained standing under the lamp, his eyes fixed upon the watch, impatiently waiting for the remaining minutes to pass. At half-past eleven precisely, Hermann ascended the steps of the house, and made his way into the brightly-illuminated vestibule. The porter was not there. Hermann hastily ascended the staircase, opened the door of the ante-room and saw a footman sitting asleep in an antique chair by the side of a lamp. With a light

firm step Hermann passed by him. The drawing-room and dining-room were in darkness, but a feeble reflection penetrated thither from the lamp in the ante-room.

Hermann reached the Countess's bedroom. Before a shrine, which was full of old images, a golden lamp was burning. Faded stuffed chairs and divans with soft cushions stood in melancholy symmetry around the room, the walls of which were hung with China silk. On one side of the room hung two portraits painted in Paris by Madame Lebrun. One of these represented a stout, red-faced man of about forty years of age in a bright-green uniform and with a star upon his breast; the other-a beautiful young woman, with an aquiline nose, forehead curls and a rose in her powdered hair. In the corners stood porcelain shepherds and shepherdesses, dining-room clocks from the workshop of the celebrated Lefroy, bandboxes, roulettes, fans and the various playthings for the amusement of ladies that were in vogue at the end of the last century, when Montgolfier's balloons and Mesmer's magnetism were the rage. Hermann stepped behind the screen. At the back of it stood a little iron bedstead; on the right was the door which led to the cabinet; on the left-the other which led to the corridor. He opened the latter, and saw the little winding staircase which led to the room of the poor companion... But he retraced his steps and entered the dark cabinet.

The time passed slowly. All was still. The clock in the drawing-room struck twelve; the strokes echoed through the room one after the other, and everything was quiet again. Hermann stood leaning against the cold stove. He was calm; his heart beat regularly, like that of a man resolved upon a dangerous but inevitable undertaking. One o'clock in the morning struck; then two; and he heard the distant noise of carriage-wheels. An involuntary agitation took possession of him. The carriage drew near and stopped. He heard the sound of the carriage-steps being let down. All was bustle within the house. The servants were running hither and thither, there was a confusion of voices, and the rooms were lit up. Three antiquated chambermaids entered the bedroom, and they were shortly afterwards followed by the Countess who, more dead than alive, sank into a Voltaire armchair. Hermann peeped through a chink. Lizaveta Ivanovna passed close by him, and he heard her hurried steps as she hastened up the little spiral staircase. For a moment his heart was assailed by something like a pricking of conscience, but the emotion was only transitory, and his heart became petrified as before.

The Countess began to undress before her looking-glass. Her rose-

bedecked cap was taken off, and then her powdered wig was removed from off her white and closely-cut hair. Hairpins fell in showers around her. Her yellow satin dress, brocaded with silver, fell down at her swollen feet.

Hermann was a witness of the repugnant mysteries of her toilette; at last the Countess was in her night-cap and dressing-gown, and in this costume, more suitable to her age, she appeared less hideous and deformed.

Like all old people in general, the Countess suffered from sleeplessness. Having undressed, she seated herself at the window in a Voltaire armchair and dismissed her maids. The candles were taken away, and once more the room was left with only one lamp burning in it. The Countess sat there looking quite yellow, mumbling with her flaccid lips and swaying to and fro. Her dull eyes expressed complete vacancy of mind, and, looking at her, one would have thought that the rocking of her body was not a voluntary action of her own, but was produced by the action of some concealed galvanic mechanism.

Suddenly the death-like face assumed an inexplicable expression. The lips ceased to tremble, the eyes became animated: before the Countess stood an unknown man.

“Do not be alarmed, for Heaven’s sake, do not be alarmed!” said he in a low but distinct voice. “I have no intention of doing you any harm, I have only come to ask a favour of you.”

The old woman looked at him in silence, as if she had not heard what he had said. Hermann thought that she was deaf, and bending down towards her ear, he repeated what he had said. The aged Countess remained silent as before.

“You can insure the happiness of my life,” continued Hermann, “and it will cost you nothing. I know that you can name three cards in order-”

Hermann stopped. The Countess appeared now to understand what he wanted; she seemed as if seeking for words to reply.

“It was a joke,” she replied at last: “I assure you it was only a joke.”

“There is no joking about the matter,” replied Hermann angrily. “Remember Chaplitzky, whom you helped to win.”

The Countess became visibly uneasy. Her features expressed strong emotion, but they quickly resumed their former immobility.

“Can you not name me these three winning cards?” continued Hermann.

The Countess remained silent; Hermann continued:

“For whom are you preserving your secret? For your grandsons? They are

rich enough without it; they do not know the worth of money. Your cards would be of no use to a spendthrift. He who cannot preserve his paternal inheritance, will die in want, even though he had a demon at his service. I am not a man of that sort; I know the value of money. Your three cards will not be thrown away upon me. Come!”...

He paused and tremblingly awaited her reply. The Countess remained silent; Hermann fell upon his knees.

“If your heart has ever known the feeling of love,” said he, “if you remember its rapture, if you have ever smiled at the cry of your new-born child, if any human feeling has ever entered into your breast, I entreat you by the feelings of a wife, a lover, a mother, by all that is most sacred in life, not to reject my prayer. Reveal to me your secret. Of what use is it to you?... May be it is connected with some terrible sin with the loss of eternal salvation, with some bargain with the devil... Reflect,-you are old; you have not long to live-I am ready to take your sins upon my soul. Only reveal to me your secret. Remember that the happiness of a man is in your hands, that not only I, but my children, and grandchildren will bless your memory and reverence you as a saint...”

The old Countess answered not a word.

Hermann rose to his feet.

“You old hag!” he exclaimed, grinding his teeth, “then I will make you answer!”

With these words he drew a pistol from his pocket.

At the sight of the pistol, the Countess for the second time exhibited strong emotion. She shook her head and raised her hands as if to protect herself from the shot... then she fell backwards and remained motionless.

“Come, an end to this childish nonsense!” said Hermann, taking hold of her hand. “I ask you for the last time: will you tell me the names of your three cards, or will you not?”

The Countess made no reply. Hermann perceived that she was dead!

IV

Lizaveta Ivanovna was sitting in her room, still in her ball dress, lost in deep thought. On returning home, she had hastily dismissed the chambermaid who very reluctantly came forward to assist her, saying that she would undress herself, and with a trembling heart had gone up to her own room, expecting to find Hermann there, but yet hoping not to find him. At the first glance she convinced herself that he was not there, and she thanked her fate for having prevented him keeping the appointment. She sat down without undressing, and began to recall to mind all the circumstances which in so short a time had carried her so far. It was not three weeks since the time when she first saw the young officer from the window-and yet she was already in correspondence with him, and he had succeeded in inducing her to grant him a nocturnal interview! She knew his name only through his having written it at the bottom of some of his letters; she had never spoken to him, had never heard his voice, and had never heard him spoken of until that evening. But, strange to say, that very evening at the ball, Tomsy, being piqued with the young Princess Pauline N-, who, contrary to her usual custom, did not flirt with him, wished to revenge himself by assuming an air of indifference: he therefore engaged Lizaveta Ivanovna and danced an endless mazurka with her. During the whole of the time he kept teasing her about her partiality for Engineer officers; he assured her that he knew far more than she imagined, and some of his jests were so happily aimed, that Lizaveta thought several times that her secret was known to him.

“From whom have you learnt all this?” she asked, smiling.

“From a friend of a person very well known to you,” replied Tomsy, “from a very distinguished man.”

“And who is this distinguished man?”

“His name is Hermann.”

Lizaveta made no reply; but her hands and feet lost all sense of feeling.

“This Hermann,” continued Tomsy, “is a man of romantic personality. He has the profile of a Napoleon, and the soul of a Mephistopheles. I believe that he has at least three crimes upon his conscience... How pale you have become!”

“I have a headache... But what did this Hermann-or whatever his name is-tell you?”

“Hermann is very much dissatisfied with his friend: he says that in his place he would act very differently... I even think that Hermann himself has designs upon you; at least, he listens very attentively to all that his friend has to say about you.”

“And where has he seen me?”

“In church, perhaps; or on the parade-God alone knows where. It may have been in your room, while you were asleep, for there is nothing that he-”

Three ladies approaching him with the question: “*oubli ou regret?*” interrupted the conversation, which had become so tantalisingly interesting to Lizaveta.

The lady chosen by Tomsy was the Princess Pauline herself. She succeeded in effecting a reconciliation with him during the numerous turns of the dance, after which he conducted her to her chair. On returning to his place, Tomsy thought no more either of Hermann or Lizaveta. She longed to renew the interrupted conversation, but the mazurka came to an end, and shortly afterwards the old Countess took her departure.

Tomsy’s words were nothing more than the customary small talk of the dance, but they sank deep into the soul of the young dreamer. The portrait, sketched by Tomsy, coincided with the picture she had formed within her own mind, and thanks to the latest romances, the ordinary countenance of her admirer became invested with attributes capable of alarming her and fascinating her imagination at the same time. She was now sitting with her bare arms crossed and with her head, still adorned with flowers, sunk upon her uncovered bosom. Suddenly the door opened and Hermann entered. She shuddered.

“Where were you?” she asked in a terrified whisper.

“In the old Countess’s bedroom,” replied Hermann: “I have just left her. The Countess is dead.”

“My God! What do you say?”

“And I am afraid,” added Hermann, “that I am the cause of her death.”

Lizaveta looked at him, and Tomsy’s words found an echo in her soul: “This man has at least three crimes upon his conscience!” Hermann sat down by the window near her, and related all that had happened.

Lizaveta listened to him in terror. So all those passionate letters, those ardent desires, this bold obstinate pursuit-all this was not love! Money-that was what his soul yearned for! She could not satisfy his desire and make him happy! The poor girl had been nothing but the blind tool of a robber, of the

murderer of her aged benefactress!... She wept bitter tears of agonised repentance. Hermann gazed at her in silence: his heart, too, was a prey to violent emotion, but neither the tears of the poor girl, nor the wonderful charm of her beauty, enhanced by her grief, could produce any impression upon his hardened soul. He felt no pricking of conscience at the thought of the dead old woman. One thing only grieved him: the irreparable loss of the secret from which he had expected to obtain great wealth.

“You are a monster!” said Lizaveta at last.

“I did not wish for her death,” replied Hermann: “my pistol was not loaded.”

Both remained silent.

The day began to dawn. Lizaveta extinguished her candle: a pale light illumined her room. She wiped her tear-stained eyes and raised them towards Hermann: he was sitting near the window, with his arms crossed and with a fierce frown upon his forehead. In this attitude he bore a striking resemblance to the portrait of Napoleon. This resemblance struck Lizaveta even.

“How shall I get you out of the house?” said she at last. “I thought of conducting you down the secret staircase, but in that case it would be necessary to go through the Countess’s bedroom, and I am afraid.”

“Tell me how to find this secret staircase-I will go alone.”

Lizaveta arose, took from her drawer a key, handed it to Hermann and gave him the necessary instructions. Hermann pressed her cold, limp hand, kissed her bowed head, and left the room.

He descended the winding staircase, and once more entered the Countess’s bedroom. The dead old lady sat as if petrified; her face expressed profound tranquillity. Hermann stopped before her, and gazed long and earnestly at her, as if he wished to convince himself of the terrible reality; at last he entered the cabinet, felt behind the tapestry for the door, and then began to descend the dark staircase, filled with strange emotions. “Down this very staircase,” thought he, “perhaps coming from the very same room, and at this very same hour sixty years ago, there may have glided, in an embroidered coat, with his hair dressed *à l’oiseau royal* and pressing to his heart his three-cornered hat, some young gallant, who has long been mouldering in the grave, but the heart of his aged mistress has only to-day ceased to beat...”

At the bottom of the staircase Hermann found a door, which he opened with a key, and then traversed a corridor which conducted him into the street.

V

Three days after the fatal night, at nine o'clock in the morning, Hermann repaired to the Convent of -, where the last honours were to be paid to the mortal remains of the old Countess. Although feeling no remorse, he could not altogether stifle the voice of conscience, which said to him: "You are the murderer of the old woman!" In spite of his entertaining very little religious belief, he was exceedingly superstitious; and believing that the dead Countess might exercise an evil influence on his life, he resolved to be present at her obsequies in order to implore her pardon.

The church was full. It was with difficulty that Hermann made his way through the crowd of people. The coffin was placed upon a rich catafalque beneath a velvet baldachin. The deceased Countess lay within it, with her hands crossed upon her breast, with a lace cap upon her head and dressed in a white satin robe. Around the catafalque stood the members of her household: the servants in black *caftans*, with armorial ribbons upon their shoulders, and candles in their hands; the relatives-children, grandchildren, and great-grandchildren-in deep mourning.

Nobody wept; tears would have been *une affectation*. The Countess was so old, that her death could have surprised nobody, and her relatives had long looked upon her as being out of the world. A famous preacher pronounced the funeral sermon. In simple and touching words he described the peaceful passing away of the righteous, who had passed long years in calm preparation for a Christian end. "The angel of death found her," said the orator, "engaged in pious meditation and waiting for the midnight bridegroom."

The service concluded amidst profound silence. The relatives went forward first to take farewell of the corpse. Then followed the numerous guests, who had come to render the last homage to her who for so many years had been a participator in their frivolous amusements. After these followed the members of the Countess's household. The last of these was an old woman of the same age as the deceased. Two young women led her forward by the hand. She had not strength enough to bow down to the ground-she merely shed a few tears and kissed the cold hand of her mistress.

Hermann now resolved to approach the coffin. He knelt down upon the cold stones and remained in that position for some minutes; at last he arose, as pale as the deceased Countess herself; he ascended the steps of the

catafalque and bent over the corpse... At that moment it seemed to him that the dead woman darted a mocking look at him and winked with one eye. Hermann started back, took a false step and fell to the ground. Several persons hurried forward and raised him up. At the same moment Lizaveta Ivanovna was borne fainting into the porch of the church. This episode disturbed for some minutes the solemnity of the gloomy ceremony. Among the congregation arose a deep murmur, and a tall thin chamberlain, a near relative of the deceased, whispered in the ear of an Englishman who was standing near him, that the young officer was a natural son of the Countess, to which the Englishman coldly replied: "Oh!"

During the whole of that day, Hermann was strangely excited. Repairing to an out-of-the-way restaurant to dine, he drank a great deal of wine, contrary to his usual custom, in the hope of deadening his inward agitation. But the wine only served to excite his imagination still more. On returning home, he threw himself upon his bed without undressing, and fell into a deep sleep.

When he woke up it was already night, and the moon was shining into the room. He looked at his watch: it was a quarter to three. Sleep had left him; he sat down upon his bed and thought of the funeral of the old Countess.

At that moment somebody in the street looked in at his window, and immediately passed on again. Hermann paid no attention to this incident. A few moments afterwards he heard the door of his ante-room open. Hermann thought that it was his orderly, drunk as usual, returning from some nocturnal expedition, but presently he heard footsteps that were unknown to him: somebody was walking softly over the floor in slippers. The door opened, and a woman dressed in white, entered the room. Hermann mistook her for his old nurse, and wondered what could bring her there at that hour of the night. But the white woman glided rapidly across the room and stood before him-and Hermann recognised the Countess!

"I have come to you against my wish," she said in a firm voice: "but I have been ordered to grant your request. Three, seven, ace, will win for you if played in succession, but only on these conditions: that you do not play more than one card in twenty-four hours, and that you never play again during the rest of your life. I forgive you my death, on condition that you marry my companion, Lizaveta Ivanovna."

With these words she turned round very quietly, walked with a shuffling gait towards the door and disappeared. Hermann heard the street-door open

and shut, and again he saw some one look in at him through the window.

For a long time Hermann could not recover himself. He then rose up and entered the next room. His orderly was lying asleep upon the floor, and he had much difficulty in waking him. The orderly was drunk as usual, and no information could be obtained from him. The street-door was locked. Hermann returned to his room, lit his candle, and wrote down all the details of his vision.

VI

Two fixed ideas can no more exist together in the moral world than two bodies can occupy one and the same place in the physical world. "Three, seven, ace," soon drove out of Hermann's mind the thought of the dead Countess. "Three, seven, ace," were perpetually running through his head and continually being repeated by his lips. If he saw a young girl, he would say: "How slender she is! quite like the three of hearts." If anybody asked: "What is the time?" he would reply: "Five minutes to seven." Every stout man that he saw reminded him of the ace. "Three, seven, ace" haunted him in his sleep, and assumed all possible shapes. The threes bloomed before him in the forms of magnificent flowers, the sevens were represented by Gothic portals, and the aces became transformed into gigantic spiders. One thought alone occupied his whole mind—to make a profitable use of the secret which he had purchased so dearly. He thought of applying for a furlough so as to travel abroad. He wanted to go to Paris and tempt fortune in some of the public gambling-houses that abounded there. Chance spared him all this trouble.

There was in Moscow a society of rich gamesters, presided over by the celebrated Chekalinsky, who had passed all his life at the card-table and had amassed millions, accepting bills of exchange for his winnings and paying his losses in ready money. His long experience secured for him the confidence of his companions, and his open house, his famous cook, and his agreeable and fascinating manners gained for him the respect of the public. He came to St. Petersburg. The young men of the capital flocked to his rooms, forgetting balls for cards, and preferring the emotions of faro to the seductions of flirting. Narumov conducted Hermann to Chekalinsky's residence.

They passed through a suite of magnificent rooms, filled with attentive domestics. The place was crowded. Generals and Privy Counsellors were playing at whist; young men were lolling carelessly upon the velvet-covered sofas, eating ices and smoking pipes. In the drawing-room, at the head of a long table, around which were assembled about a score of players, sat the master of the house keeping the bank. He was a man of about sixty years of age, of a very dignified appearance; his head was covered with silvery-white hair; his full, florid countenance expressed good-nature, and his eyes twinkled with a perpetual smile. Narumov introduced Hermann to him. Chekalinsky shook him by the hand in a friendly manner, requested him not

to stand on ceremony, and then went on dealing.

The game occupied some time. On the table lay more than thirty cards. Chekalinsky paused after each throw, in order to give the players time to arrange their cards and note down their losses, listened politely to their requests, and more politely still, put straight the corners of cards that some player's hand had chanced to bend. At last the game was finished. Chekalinsky shuffled the cards and prepared to deal again.

"Will you allow me to take a card?" said Hermann, stretching out his hand from behind a stout gentleman who was punting.

Chekalinsky smiled and bowed silently, as a sign of acquiescence. Narumov laughingly congratulated Hermann on his abjuration of that abstention from cards which he had practised for so long a period, and wished him a lucky beginning.

"Stake!" said Hermann, writing some figures with chalk on the back of his card.

"How much?" asked the banker, contracting the muscles of his eyes; "excuse me, I cannot see quite clearly."

"Forty-seven thousand rubles," replied Hermann.

At these words every head in the room turned suddenly round, and all eyes were fixed upon Hermann.

"He has taken leave of his senses!" thought Narumov.

"Allow me to inform you," said Chekalinsky, with his eternal smile, "that you are playing very high; nobody here has ever staked more than two hundred and seventy-five rubles at once."

"Very well," replied Hermann; "but do you accept my card or not?"

Chekalinsky bowed in token of consent.

"I only wish to observe," said he, "that although I have the greatest confidence in my friends, I can only play against ready money. For my own part, I am quite convinced that your word is sufficient, but for the sake of the order of the game, and to facilitate the reckoning up, I must ask you to put the money on your card."

Hermann drew from his pocket a bank-note and handed it to Chekalinsky, who, after examining it in a cursory manner, placed it on Hermann's card.

He began to deal. On the right a nine turned up, and on the left a three.

"I have won!" said Hermann, showing his card.

A murmur of astonishment arose among the players. Chekalinsky frowned, but the smile quickly returned to his face.

“Do you wish me to settle with you?” he said to Hermann.

“If you please,” replied the latter.

Chekalinsky drew from his pocket a number of banknotes and paid at once. Hermann took up his money and left the table. Narumov could not recover from his astonishment. Hermann drank a glass of lemonade and returned home.

The next evening he again repaired to Chekalinsky’s. The host was dealing. Hermann walked up to the table; the punters immediately made room for him. Chekalinsky greeted him with a gracious bow.

Hermann waited for the next deal, took a card and placed upon it his forty-seven thousand roubles, together with his winnings of the previous evening.

Chekalinsky began to deal. A knave turned up on the right, a seven on the left.

Hermann showed his seven.

There was a general exclamation. Chekalinsky was evidently ill at ease, but he counted out the ninety-four thousand rubles and handed them over to Hermann, who pocketed them in the coolest manner possible and immediately left the house.

The next evening Hermann appeared again at the table. Every one was expecting him. The generals and Privy Counsellors left their whist in order to watch such extraordinary play. The young officers quitted their sofas, and even the servants crowded into the room. All pressed round Hermann. The other players left off punting, impatient to see how it would end. Hermann stood at the table and prepared to play alone against the pale, but still smiling Chekalinsky. Each opened a pack of cards. Chekalinsky shuffled. Hermann took a card and covered it with a pile of bank-notes. It was like a duel. Deep silence reigned around.

Chekalinsky began to deal; his hands trembled. On the right a queen turned up, and on the left an ace.

“Ace has won!” cried Hermann, showing his card.

“Your queen has lost,” said Chekalinsky, politely.

Hermann started; instead of an ace, there lay before him the queen of spades! He could not believe his eyes, nor could he understand how he had made such a mistake.

At that moment it seemed to him that the queen of spades smiled ironically and winked her eye at him. He was struck by her remarkable

resemblance...

“The old Countess!” he exclaimed, seized with terror.

Chekalinsky gathered up his winnings. For some time, Hermann remained perfectly motionless. When at last he left the table, there was a general commotion in the room.

“Splendidly punted!” said the players. Chekalinsky shuffled the cards afresh, and the game went on as usual.

Hermann went out of his mind, and is now confined in room Number 17 of the Obukhov Hospital. He never answers any questions, but he constantly mutters with unusual rapidity: “Three, seven, ace!” “Three, seven, queen!”

Lizaveta Ivanovna has married a very amiable young man, a son of the former steward of the old Countess. He is in the service of the State somewhere, and is in receipt of a good income. Lizaveta is also supporting a poor relative.

Tomsky has been promoted to the rank of captain, and has become the husband of the Princess Pauline.

LEO TOLSTOY

A LETTER TO A HINDU

THE SUBJECTION OF INDIA-ITS CAUSE AND CURE

With an Introduction by M. K. GANDHI

INTRODUCTION

The letter printed below is a translation of Tolstoy's letter written in Russian in reply to one from the Editor of Free Hindustan. After having passed from hand to hand, this letter at last came into my possession through a friend who asked me, as one much interested in Tolstoy's writings, whether I thought it worth publishing. I at once replied in the affirmative, and told him I should translate it myself into Gujarati and induce others' to translate and publish it in various Indian vernaculars.

The letter as received by me was a type-written copy. It was therefore referred to the author, who confirmed it as his and kindly granted me permission to print it.

To me, as a humble follower of that great teacher whom I have long looked upon as one of my guides, it is a matter of honour to be connected with the publication of his letter, such especially as the one which is now being given to the world.

It is a mere statement of fact to say that every Indian, whether he owns up to it or not, has national aspirations. But there are as many opinions as there are Indian nationalists as to the exact meaning of that aspiration, and more especially as to the methods to be used to attain the end.

One of the accepted and 'time-honoured' methods to attain the end is that of violence. The assassination of Sir Curzon Wylie was an illustration of that method in its worst and most detestable form. Tolstoy's life has been devoted to replacing the method of violence for removing tyranny or securing reform by the method of non-resistance to evil. He would meet hatred expressed in violence by love expressed in self-suffering. He admits of no exception to whittle down this great and divine law of love. He applies it to all the problems that trouble mankind.

When a man like Tolstoy, one of the clearest thinkers in the western world, one of the greatest writers, one who as a soldier has known what violence is and what it can do, condemns Japan for having blindly followed the law of modern science, falsely so-called, and fears for that country 'the greatest calamities', it is for us to pause and consider whether, in our impatience of English rule, we do not want to replace one evil by another and a worse. India, which is the nursery of the great faiths of the world, will cease to be nationalist India, whatever else she may become, when she goes

through the process of civilization in the shape of reproduction on that sacred soil of gun factories and the hateful industrialism which has reduced the people of Europe to a state of slavery, and all but stifled among them the best instincts which are the heritage of the human family.

If we do not want the English in India we must pay the price. Tolstoy indicates it. 'Do not resist evil, but also do not yourselves participate in evil-in the violent deeds of the administration of the law courts, the collection of taxes and, what is more important, of the soldiers, and no one in the world will enslave you', passionately declares the sage of Yasnaya Polyana. Who can question the truth of what he says in the following: 'A commercial company enslaved a nation comprising two hundred millions. Tell this to a man free from superstition and he will fail to grasp what these words mean. What does it mean that thirty thousand people, not athletes, but rather weak and ordinary people, have enslaved two hundred millions of vigorous, clever, capable, freedom-loving people? Do not the figures make it clear that not the English, but the Indians, have enslaved themselves?'

One need not accept all that Tolstoy says-some of his facts are not accurately stated-to realize the central truth of his indictment of the present system, which is to understand and act upon the irresistible power of the soul over the body, of love, which is an attribute of the soul, over the brute or body force generated by the stirring in us of evil passions.

There is no doubt that there is nothing new in what Tolstoy preaches. But his presentation of the old truth is refreshingly forceful. His logic is unassailable. And above all he endeavours to practise what he preaches. He preaches to convince. He is sincere and in earnest. He commands attention.

[19th November, 1909] M. K. GANDHI

All that exists is One. People only call this One by different names. THE VEDAS.

God is love, and he that abideth in love abideth in God, and God abideth in him. I JOHN iv. 16.

God is one whole; we are the parts. EXPOSITION OF THE TEACHING OF THE VEDAS BY VIVEKANANDA.

I

Do not seek quiet and rest in those earthly realms where delusions and desires are engendered, for if thou dost, thou wilt be dragged through the rough wilderness of life, which is far from Me.

Whenever thou feelest that thy feet are becoming entangled in the interlaced roots of life, know that thou has strayed from the path to which I beckon thee: for I have placed thee in broad, smooth paths, which are strewn with flowers. I have put a light before thee, which thou canst follow and thus run without stumbling. KRISHNA.

I have received your letter and two numbers of your periodical, both of which interest me extremely. The oppression of a majority by a minority, and the demoralization inevitably resulting from it, is a phenomenon that has always occupied me and has done so most particularly of late. I will try to explain to you what I think about that subject in general, and particularly about the cause from which the dreadful evils of which you write in your letter, and in the Hindu periodical you have sent me, have arisen and continue to arise.

The reason for the astonishing fact that a majority of working people submit to a handful of idlers who control their labour and their very lives is always and everywhere the same-whether the oppressors and oppressed are of one race or whether, as in India and elsewhere, the oppressors are of a different nation.

This phenomenon seems particularly strange in India, for there more than two hundred million people, highly gifted both physically and mentally, find themselves in the power of a small group of people quite alien to them in thought, and immeasurably inferior to them in religious morality.

From your letter and the articles in *Free Hindustan* as well as from the very interesting writings of the Hindu Swami Vivekananda and others, it appears that, as is the case in our time with the ills of all nations, the reason lies in the lack of a reasonable religious teaching which by explaining the meaning of life would supply a supreme law for the guidance of conduct and would replace the more than dubious precepts of pseudo-religion and pseudo-science with the immoral conclusions deduced from them and commonly called 'civilization'.

Your letter, as well as the articles in *Free Hindustan* and Indian political

literature generally, shows that most of the leaders of public opinion among your people no longer attach any significance to the religious teachings that were and are professed by the peoples of India, and recognize no possibility of freeing the people from the oppression they endure except by adopting the irreligious and profoundly immoral social arrangements under which the English and other pseudo-Christian nations live to-day.

And yet the chief if not the sole cause of the enslavement of the Indian peoples by the English lies in this very absence of a religious consciousness and of the guidance for conduct which should flow from it-a lack common in our day to all nations East and West, from Japan to England and America alike.

II

O ye, who see perplexities over your heads, beneath your feet, and to the right and left of you; you will be an eternal enigma unto yourselves until ye become humble and joyful as children. Then will ye find Me, and having found Me in yourselves, you will rule over worlds, and looking out from the great world within to the little world without, you will bless everything that is, and find all is well with time and with you. KRISHNA.

To make my thoughts clear to you I must go farther back. We do not, cannot, and I venture to say need not, know how men lived millions of years ago or even ten thousand years ago, but we do know positively that, as far back as we have any knowledge of mankind, it has always lived in special groups of families, tribes, and nations in which the majority, in the conviction that it must be so, submissively and willingly bowed to the rule of one or more persons-that is to a very small minority. Despite all varieties of circumstances and personalities these relations manifested themselves among the various peoples of whose origin we have any knowledge; and the farther back we go the more absolutely necessary did this arrangement appear, both to the rulers and the ruled, to make it possible for people to live peacefully together.

So it was everywhere. But though this external form of life existed for centuries and still exists, very early-thousands of years before our time-amid this life based on coercion, one and the same thought constantly emerged among different nations, namely, that in every individual a spiritual element is manifested that gives life to all that exists, and that this spiritual element strives to unite with everything of a like nature to itself, and attains this aim through love. This thought appeared in most various forms at different times and places, with varying completeness and clarity. It found expression in Brahmanism, Judaism, Mazdaism (the teachings of Zoroaster), in Buddhism, Taoism, Confucianism, and in the writings of the Greek and Roman sages, as well as in Christianity and Mohammedanism. The mere fact that this thought has sprung up among different nations and at different times indicates that it is inherent in human nature and contains the truth. But this truth was made known to people who considered that a community could only be kept together if some of them restrained others, and so it appeared quite irreconcilable with the existing order of society. Moreover it was at first

expressed only fragmentarily, and so obscurely that though people admitted its theoretic truth they could not entirely accept it as guidance for their conduct. Then, too, the dissemination of the truth in a society based on coercion was always hindered in one and the same manner, namely, those in power, feeling that the recognition of this truth would undermine their position, consciously or sometimes unconsciously perverted it by explanations and additions quite foreign to it, and also opposed it by open violence. Thus the truth-that his life should be directed by the spiritual element which is its basis, which manifests itself as love, and which is so natural to man-this truth, in order to force a way to man's consciousness, had to struggle not merely against the obscurity with which it was expressed and the intentional and unintentional distortions surrounding it, but also against deliberate violence, which by means of persecutions and punishments sought to compel men to accept religious laws authorized by the rulers and conflicting with the truth. Such a hindrance and misrepresentation of the truth-which had not yet achieved complete clarity-occurred everywhere: in Confucianism and Taoism, in Buddhism and in Christianity, in Mohammedanism and in your Brahmanism.

III

My hand has sowed love everywhere, giving unto all that will receive. Blessings are offered unto all My children, but many times in their blindness they fail to see them. How few there are who gather the gifts which lie in profusion at their feet: how many there are, who, in wilful waywardness, turn their eyes away from them and complain with a wail that they have not that which I have given them; many of them defiantly repudiate not only My gifts, but Me also, Me, the Source of all blessings and the Author of their being.
KRISHNA.

I tarry awhile from the turmoil and strife of the world. I will beautify and quicken thy life with love and with joy, for the light of the soul is Love. Where Love is, there is contentment and peace, and where there is contentment and peace, there am I, also, in their midst. KRISHNA.

The aim of the sinless One consists in acting without causing sorrow to others, although he could attain to great power by ignoring their feelings.

The aim of the sinless One lies in not doing evil unto those who have done evil unto him.

If a man causes suffering even to those who hate him without any reason, he will ultimately have grief not to be overcome.

The punishment of evil doers consists in making them feel ashamed of themselves by doing them a great kindness.

Of what use is superior knowledge in the one, if he does not endeavour to relieve his neighbour's want as much as his own?

If, in the morning, a man wishes to do evil unto another, in the evening the evil will return to him.

THE HINDU KURAL.

Thus it went on everywhere. The recognition that love represents the highest morality was nowhere denied or contradicted, but this truth was so interwoven everywhere with all kinds of falsehoods which distorted it, that finally nothing of it remained but words. It was taught that this highest morality was only applicable to private life-for home use, as it were-but that in public life all forms of violence-such as imprisonment, executions, and wars-might be used for the protection of the majority against a minority of evildoers, though such means were diametrically opposed to any vestige of love. And though common sense indicated that if some men claim to decide

who is to be subjected to violence of all kinds for the benefit of others, these men to whom violence is applied may, in turn, arrive at a similar conclusion with regard to those who have employed violence to them, and though the great religious teachers of Brahmanism, Buddhism, and above all of Christianity, foreseeing such a perversion of the law of love, have constantly drawn attention to the one invariable condition of love (namely, the enduring of injuries, insults, and violence of all kinds without resisting evil by evil) people continued-regardless of all that leads man forward-to try to unite the incompatibles: the virtue of love, and what is opposed to love, namely, the restraining of evil by violence. And such a teaching, despite its inner contradiction, was so firmly established that the very people who recognize love as a virtue accept as lawful at the same time an order of life based on violence and allowing men not merely to torture but even to kill one another.

For a long time people lived in this obvious contradiction without noticing it. But a time arrived when this contradiction became more and more evident to thinkers of various nations. And the old and simple truth that it is natural for men to help and to love one another, but not to torture and to kill one another, became ever clearer, so that fewer and fewer people were able to believe the sophistries by which the distortion of the truth had been made so plausible.

In former times the chief method of justifying the use of violence and thereby infringing the law of love was by claiming a divine right for the rulers: the Tsars, Sultans, Rajahs, Shahs, and other heads of states. But the longer humanity lived the weaker grew the belief in this peculiar, God-given right of the ruler. That belief withered in the same way and almost simultaneously in the Christian and the Brahman world, as well as in Buddhist and Confucian spheres, and in recent times it has so faded away as to prevail no longer against man's reasonable understanding and the true religious feeling. People saw more and more clearly, and now the majority see quite clearly, the senselessness and immorality of subordinating their wills to those of other people just like themselves, when they are bidden to do what is contrary not only to their interests but also to their moral sense. And so one might suppose that having lost confidence in any religious authority for a belief in the divinity of potentates of various kinds, people would try to free themselves from subjection to it. But unfortunately not only were the rulers, who were considered supernatural beings, benefited by having the peoples in subjection, but as a result of the belief in, and during the rule of,

these pseudodivine beings, ever larger and larger circles of people grouped and established themselves around them, and under an appearance of governing took advantage of the people. And when the old deception of a supernatural and God-appointed authority had dwindled away these men were only concerned to devise a new one which like its predecessor should make it possible to hold the people in bondage to a limited number of rulers.

IV

Children, do you want to know by what your hearts should be guided? Throw aside your longings and strivings after that which is null and void; get rid of your erroneous thoughts about happiness and wisdom, and your empty and insincere desires. Dispense with these and you will know Love. KRISHNA.

Be not the destroyers of yourselves. Arise to your true Being, and then you will have nothing to fear. KRISHNA.

New justifications have now appeared in place of the antiquated, obsolete, religious ones. These new justifications are just as inadequate as the old ones, but as they are new their futility cannot immediately be recognized by the majority of men. Besides this, those who enjoy power propagate these new sophistries and support them so skilfully that they seem irrefutable even to many of those who suffer from the oppression these theories seek to justify. These new justifications are termed 'scientific'. But by the term 'scientific' is understood just what was formerly understood by the term 'religious': just as formerly everything called 'religious' was held to be unquestionable simply because it was called religious, so now all that is called 'scientific' is held to be unquestionable. In the present case the obsolete religious justification of violence which consisted in the recognition of the supernatural personality of the God-ordained ruler ('there is no power but of God') has been superseded by the 'scientific' justification which puts forward, first, the assertion that because the coercion of man by man has existed in all ages, it follows that such coercion must continue to exist. This assertion that people should continue to live as they have done throughout past ages rather than as their reason and conscience indicate, is what 'science' calls 'the historic law'. A further 'scientific' justification lies in the statement that as among plants and wild beasts there is a constant struggle for existence which always results in the survival of the fittest, a similar struggle should be carried on among human beings-beings, that is, who are gifted with intelligence and love; faculties lacking in the creatures subject to the struggle for existence and survival of the fittest. Such is the second 'scientific' justification.

The third, most important, and unfortunately most widespread justification is, at bottom, the age-old religious one just a little altered: that in public life the suppression of some for the protection of the majority cannot

be avoided-so that coercion is unavoidable however desirable reliance on love alone might be in human intercourse. The only difference in this justification by pseudo-science consists in the fact that, to the question why such and such people and not others have the right to decide against whom violence may and must be used, pseudo-science now gives a different reply to that given by religion-which declared that the right to decide was valid because it was pronounced by persons possessed of divine power. 'Science' says that these decisions represent the will of the people, which under a constitutional form of government is supposed to find expression in all the decisions and actions of those who are at the helm at the moment.

Such are the scientific justifications of the principle of coercion. They are not merely weak but absolutely invalid, yet they are so much needed by those who occupy privileged positions that they believe in them as blindly as they formerly believed in the immaculate conception, and propagate them just as confidently. And the unfortunate majority of men bound to toil is so dazzled by the pomp with which these 'scientific truths' are presented, that under this new influence it accepts these scientific stupidities for holy truth, just as it formerly accepted the pseudo-religious justifications; and it continues to submit to the present holders of power who are just as hard-hearted but rather more numerous than before.

V

Who am I? I am that which thou hast searched for since thy baby eyes gazed wonderingly upon the world, whose horizon hides this real life from thee. I am that which in thy heart thou hast prayed for, demanded as thy birthright, although thou hast not known what it was. I am that which has lain in thy soul for hundreds and thousands of years. Sometimes I lay in thee grieving because thou didst not recognize me; sometimes I raised my head, opened my eyes, and extended my arms calling thee either tenderly and quietly, or strenuously, demanding that thou shouldst rebel against the iron chains which bound thee to the earth.

KRISHNA.

So matters went on, and still go on, in the Christian world. But we might have hope that in the immense Brahman, Buddhist, and Confucian worlds this new scientific superstition would not establish itself, and that the Chinese, Japanese, and Hindus, once their eyes were opened to the religious fraud justifying violence, would advance directly to a recognition of the law of love inherent in humanity, and which had been so forcibly enunciated by the great Eastern teachers. But what has happened is that the scientific superstition replacing the religious one has been accepted and secured a stronger and stronger hold in the East.

In your periodical you set out as the basic principle which should guide the actions of your people the maxim that: 'Resistance to aggression is not simply justifiable but imperative, nonresistance hurts both Altruism and Egotism.'

Love is the only way to rescue humanity from all ills, and in it you too have the only method of saving your people from enslavement. In very ancient times love was proclaimed with special strength and clearness among your people to be the religious basis of human life. Love, and forcible resistance to evil-doers, involve such a mutual contradiction as to destroy utterly the whole sense and meaning of the conception of love. And what follows? With a light heart and in the twentieth century you, an adherent of a religious people, deny their law, feeling convinced of your scientific enlightenment and your right to do so, and you repeat (do not take this amiss) the amazing stupidity indoctrinated in you by the advocates of the use of violence-the enemies of truth, the servants first of theology and then of

science-your European teachers.

You say that the English have enslaved your people and hold them in subjection because the latter have not resisted resolutely enough and have not met force by force.

But the case is just the opposite. If the English have enslaved the people of India it is just because the latter recognized, and still recognize, force as the fundamental principle of the social order. In accord with that principle they submitted to their little rajahs, and on their behalf struggled against one another, fought the Europeans, the English, and are now trying to fight with them again.

A commercial company enslaved a nation comprising two hundred millions. Tell this to a man free from superstition and he will fail to grasp what these words mean. What does it mean that thirty thousand men, not athletes but rather weak and ordinary people, have subdued two hundred million vigorous, clever, capable, and freedom-loving people? Do not the figures make it clear that it is not the English who have enslaved the Indians, but the Indians who have enslaved themselves?

When the Indians complain that the English have enslaved them it is as if drunkards complained that the spirit-dealers who have settled among them have enslaved them. You tell them that they might give up drinking, but they reply that they are so accustomed to it that they cannot abstain, and that they must have alcohol to keep up their energy. Is it not the same thing with the millions of people who submit to thousands' or even to hundreds, of others-of their own or other nations?

If the people of India are enslaved by violence it is only because they themselves live and have lived by violence, and do not recognize the eternal law of love inherent in humanity.

Pitiful and foolish is the man who seeks what he already has, and does not know that he has it. Yes, Pitiful and foolish is he who does not know the bliss of love which surrounds him and which I have given him. KRISHNA.

As soon as men live entirely in accord with the law of love natural to their hearts and now revealed to them, which excludes all resistance by violence, and therefore hold aloof from all participation in violence-as soon as this happens, not only will hundreds be unable to enslave millions, but not even millions will be able to enslave a single individual. Do not resist the evil-doer and take no part in doing so, either in the violent deeds of the administration, in the law courts, the collection of taxes, or above all in soldiering, and no

one in the world will be able to enslave you.

VI

O ye who sit in bondage and continually seek and pant for freedom, seek only for love. Love is peace in itself and peace which gives complete satisfaction. I am the key that opens the portal to the rarely discovered land where contentment alone is found. KRISHNA.

What is now happening to the people of the East as of the West is like what happens to every individual when he passes from childhood to adolescence and from youth to manhood. He loses what had hitherto guided his life and lives without direction, not having found a new standard suitable to his age, and so he invents all sorts of occupations, cares, distractions, and stupefactions to divert his attention from the misery and senselessness of his life. Such a condition may last a long time.

When an individual passes from one period of life to another a time comes when he cannot go on in senseless activity and excitement as before, but has to understand that although he has outgrown what before used to direct him, this does not mean that he must live without any reasonable guidance, but rather that he must formulate for himself an understanding of life corresponding to his age, and having elucidated it must be guided by it. And in the same way a similar time must come in the growth and development of humanity. I believe that such a time has now arrived-not in the sense that it has come in the year 1908, but that the inherent contradiction of human life has now reached an extreme degree of tension: on the one side there is the consciousness of the beneficence of the law of love, and on the other the existing order of life which has for centuries occasioned an empty, anxious, restless, and troubled mode of life, conflicting as it does with the law of love and built on the use of violence. This contradiction must be faced, and the solution will evidently not be favourable to the outlived law of violence, but to the truth which has dwelt in the hearts of men from remote antiquity: the truth that the law of love is in accord with the nature of man.

But men can only recognize this truth to its full extent when they have completely freed themselves from all religious and scientific superstitions and from all the consequent misrepresentations and sophistical distortions by which its recognition has been hindered for centuries.

To save a sinking ship it is necessary to throw overboard the ballast, which though it may once have been needed would now cause the ship to

sink. And so it is with the scientific superstition which hides the truth of their welfare from mankind. In order that men should embrace the truth-not in the vague way they did in childhood, nor in the one-sided and perverted way presented to them by their religious and scientific teachers, but embrace it as their highest law-the complete liberation of this truth from all and every superstition (both pseudo-religious and pseudo-scientific) by which it is still obscured is essential: not a partial, timid attempt, reckoning with traditions sanctified by age and with the habits of the people-not such as was effected in the religious sphere by Guru-Nanak, the founder of the sect of the Sikhs, and in the Christian world by Luther, and by similar reformers in other religions-but a fundamental cleansing of religious consciousness from all ancient religious and modern scientific superstitions.

If only people freed themselves from their beliefs in all kinds of Ormuzds, Brahmas, Sabbaoths, and their incarnation as Krishnas and Christs, from beliefs in Paradises and Hells, in reincarnations and resurrections, from belief in the interference of the Gods in the external affairs of the universe, and above all, if they freed themselves from belief in the infallibility of all the various Vedas, Bibles, Gospels, Tripitakas, Korans, and the like, and also freed themselves from blind belief in a variety of scientific teachings about infinitely small atoms and molecules and in all the infinitely great and infinitely remote worlds, their movements and origin, as well as from faith in the infallibility of the scientific law to which humanity is at present subjected: the historic law, the economic laws, the law of struggle and survival, and so on-if people only freed themselves from this terrible accumulation of futile exercises of our lower capacities of mind and memory called the 'Sciences', and from the innumerable divisions of all sorts of histories, anthropologies, homiletics, bacteriologics, jurisprudences, cosmographies, strategies-their name is legion-and freed themselves from all this harmful, stupifying ballast-the simple law of love, natural to man, accessible to all and solving all questions and perplexities, would of itself become clear and obligatory.

VII

Children, look at the flowers at your feet; do not trample upon them. Look at the love in your midst and do not repudiate it. KRISHNA.

There is a higher reason which transcends all human minds. It is far and near. It permeates all the worlds and at the same time is infinitely higher than they.

A man who sees that all things are contained in the higher spirit cannot treat any being with contempt.

For him to whom all spiritual beings are equal to the highest there can be no room for deception or grief.

Those who are ignorant and are devoted to the religious rites only, are in a deep gloom, but those who are given up to fruitless meditations are in a still greater darkness.

UPANISHADS, FROM VEDAS.

Yes, in our time all these things must be cleared away in order that mankind may escape from self-inflicted calamities that have reached an extreme intensity. Whether an Indian seeks liberation from subjection to the English, or anyone else struggles with an oppressor either of his own nationality or of another-whether it be a Negro defending himself against the North Americans; or Persians, Russians, or Turks against the Persian, Russian, or Turkish governments, or any man seeking the greatest welfare for himself and for everybody else-they do not need explanations and justifications of old religious superstitions such as have been formulated by your Vivekanandas, Baba Bharatis, and others, or in the Christian world by a number of similar interpreters and exponents of things that nobody needs; nor the innumerable scientific theories about matters not only unnecessary but for the most part harmful. (In the spiritual realm nothing is indifferent: what is not useful is harmful.) What are wanted for the Indian as for the Englishman, the Frenchman, the German, and the Russian, are not Constitutions and Revolutions, nor all sorts of Conferences and Congresses, nor the many ingenious devices for submarine navigation and aerial navigation, nor powerful explosives, nor all sorts of conveniences to add to the enjoyment of the rich, ruling classes; nor new schools and universities with innumerable faculties of science, nor an augmentation of papers and books, nor gramophones and cinematographs, nor those childish and for the most part

corrupt stupidities termed art-but one thing only is needful: the knowledge of the simple and clear truth which finds place in every soul that is not stupefied by religious and scientific superstitions-the truth that for our life one law is valid-the law of love, which brings the highest happiness to every individual as well as to all mankind. Free your minds from those overgrown, mountainous imbecilities which hinder your recognition of it, and at once the truth will emerge from amid the pseudo-religious nonsense that has been smothering it: the indubitable, eternal truth inherent in man, which is one and the same in all the great religions of the world. It will in due time emerge and make its way to general recognition, and the nonsense that has obscured it will disappear of itself, and with it will go the evil from which humanity now suffers.

Children, look upwards with your beclouded eyes, and a world full of joy and love will disclose itself to you, a rational world made by My wisdom, the only real world. Then you will know what love has done with you, what love has bestowed upon you, what love demands from you. KRISHNA.

YASNAYA POLYANA.

December 14th, 1908.

THE DEATH OF IVAN ILYICH

I

IN THE BIG BUILDING of the law courts, during a break in hearing the case of the Melvinskys, the members and the prosecutor met in Ivan Yegorovich Shebek's office, and the conversation turned to the famous Krasovsky case. Fyodor Vassilievich became heated demonstrating non-jurisdiction, Ivan Yegorovich stood his ground; as for Pyotr Ivanovich, not having entered into the argument in the beginning, he took no part in it and was looking through the just-delivered *Gazette*.

"Gentlemen," he said, "Ivan Ilyich is dead!"

"Can it be?"

"Here, read it," he said to Fyodor Vassilievich, handing him the paper still smelling of fresh ink.

Inside a black border was printed: "It is with profound grief that Praskovya Fyodorovna Golovin informs relations and acquaintances of the passing away of her beloved husband, Ivan Ilyich Golovin, member of the Court of Law, which took place on the 4th of February of this year 1882. The funeral will take place on Friday at 1 p.m."

Ivan Ilyich had been a colleague of the assembled gentlemen, and they had all liked him. He had been ill for several weeks; it had been said that his illness was incurable. His post had been kept open for him, but there was an understanding that, in case of his death, Alexeev might be named to his post, and to Alexeev's post either Vinnikov or Shtabel. So that, on hearing of Ivan Ilyich's death, the first thought of each of the gentlemen assembled in the office was of what this death might mean in terms of transfers or promotions of the members themselves or of their acquaintances.

"Now I'll probably get Shtabel's or Vinnikov's post," thought Fyodor Vassilievich. "It was promised to me long ago, and the promotion means a raise of eight hundred roubles, plus office expenses."

"I must now request my brother-in-law's transfer from Kaluga," thought Pyotr Ivanovich. "My wife will be very glad. Now she won't be able to say I've never done anything for her family."

"I thought he would never get on his feet," Pyotr Ivanovich said aloud. "What a pity."

"But what exactly did he have?"

"The doctors couldn't determine. That is, they did, but differently. When I

saw him the last time, it seemed to me he'd recover."

"And I haven't visited him since the holidays. I kept meaning to."

"Did he have money?"

"It seems his wife has a little something. But quite insignificant."

"Yes, we'll have to go. They live terribly far away."

"From you, that is. Everything's far from you."

"See, he can't forgive me for living across the river," Pyotr Ivanovich said, smiling at Shebek. And they started talking about the long distances in town and went back to the session.

Apart from the reflections this death called up in each of them about the transfers and possible changes at work that might result from it, the very fact of the death of a close acquaintance called up in all those who heard of it, as always, a feeling of joy that it was he who was dead and not I.

"You see, he's dead, and I'm not," each of them thought or felt. Close acquaintances, Ivan Ilyich's so-called friends, involuntarily thought as well that it would now be necessary for them to fulfill the very boring obligations of decency and go to the funeral service and to the widow on a visit of condolence.

Closest of all were Fyodor Vassilievich and Pyotr Ivanovich.

Pyotr Ivanovich had been Ivan Ilyich's comrade in law school and considered himself as under obligation to him.

Having told his wife over dinner the news of Ivan Ilyich's death and his reflections on the possible transfer of his brother-in-law to their district, Pyotr Ivanovich, without lying down to rest, put on his tailcoat and drove to Ivan Ilyich's.

At the entrance to Ivan Ilyich's apartments stood a carriage and two cabs. Downstairs, in the front hall by the coatrack, leaning against the wall, was a silk-brocaded coffin lid with tassels and freshly polished gold braid. Two ladies in black were taking off their fur coats. One, Ivan Ilyich's sister, he knew; the other was an unknown lady. Pyotr Ivanovich's colleague, Schwartz, was about to come downstairs and, from the topmost step, seeing him enter, stopped and winked at him, as if to say: "Ivan Ilyich made a botch of it; we'll do better, you and I."

Schwartz's face with its English side-whiskers and his whole slim figure in its tailcoat had, as usual, an elegant solemnity, and this solemnity, always in contrast to Schwartz's playful character, had a special piquancy here. So thought Pyotr Ivanovich.

Pyotr Ivanovich let the ladies go ahead of him and slowly followed them up the stairs. Schwartz did not start down, but remained upstairs. Pyotr Ivanovich understood why: he obviously wanted to arrange where to play vint¹ that evening. The ladies went on upstairs to the widow, and Schwartz, with seriously compressed, firm lips and a playful glance, moved his eyebrows to show Pyotr Ivanovich to the right, to the dead man's room.

Pyotr Ivanovich went in, as always happens, with some perplexity about what he was to do there. One thing he did know, that crossing oneself on such occasions never did any harm. Concerning the need to bow at the same time, he was not quite sure, and therefore he chose something in between: going into the room, he began to cross himself and to bow slightly, as it were. At the same time, insofar as his moving hand and head allowed him, he looked around the room. Two young men, one a schoolboy, nephews apparently, were crossing themselves as they left the room. A little old lady stood motionless. And a lady with strangely raised eyebrows was saying something to her in a whisper. A reader in a frock coat, brisk, resolute, was loudly reading something with an expression that precluded all contradiction; the butler's helper, Gerasim, passing in front of Pyotr Ivanovich with light steps, sprinkled something on the floor. Seeing this, Pyotr Ivanovich at once sensed a slight smell of decaying corpse. During his last visit with Ivan Ilyich, Pyotr Ivanovich had seen this muzhik in the study; he had performed the duties of a nurse, and Ivan Ilyich had especially liked him. Pyotr Ivanovich kept crossing himself and bowing slightly in an intermediary direction between the coffin, the reader, and the icons on a table in the corner. Then, when this movement of crossing himself with his hand seemed to have gone on too long, he stopped and began to examine the dead man.

The dead man lay, as dead men always lie, with a peculiar heaviness, dead-man fashion, his stiffened limbs sunk into the lining of the coffin, his forever bent head on the pillow, displaying, as dead men always do, his yellow, waxen forehead with the hair brushed forward on his sunken temples, and his thrust-out nose, as if pressing down on his upper lip. He had changed very much, had grown still thinner, since Pyotr Ivanovich last saw him, but, as with all dead people, his face was more handsome, and above all more significant, than it had been in the living man. There was on his face the expression that what needed to be done had been done, and done rightly. Besides that, there was also in that expression a reproach or a reminder to the living. This reminder seemed out of place to Pyotr Ivanovich, or at least of no

concern to him. Something felt unpleasant to him, and therefore Pyotr Ivanovich crossed himself again hastily, too hastily, as it seemed to him, to conform to decency, turned and went to the door. Schwartz was waiting for him in the passage, his legs straddled, his hands playing with his top hat behind his back. One glance at Schwartz's playful, clean, and elegant figure refreshed Pyotr Ivanovich. Pyotr Ivanovich understood that he, Schwartz, was above it all and would not succumb to depressing impressions. His look alone said: the incident of the funeral service for Ivan Ilyich could in no way serve as a sufficient motive for considering the order of the session disrupted, that is, that nothing could prevent them from cracking a newly unsealed deck of cards that same evening, while a valet set up four as yet unlit candles; in general, there were no grounds for supposing that this incident could prevent us from spending that evening pleasantly. He even said so in a whisper to the passing Pyotr Ivanovich, suggesting that they get together for a game at Fyodor Vassilievich's. But Pyotr Ivanovich was evidently not fated to play vint that evening. Praskovya Fyodorovna, a short, fat woman, who, despite all her efforts to achieve the contrary, still broadened from the shoulders down, dressed all in black, her head covered with lace, and with the same strangely raised eyebrows as the lady who had stood facing the coffin, came out of her rooms with other ladies and, accompanying them to the dead man's door, said:

"The service will begin at once; please go in."

Schwartz, bowing indefinitely, stood there, apparently neither accepting nor declining this suggestion. Praskovya Fyodorovna, recognizing Pyotr Ivanovich, sighed, went up close to him, took him by the hand, and said:

"I know you were a true friend of Ivan Ilyich..." and looked at him, expecting some action from him that would correspond to those words.

Pyotr Ivanovich knew that, as there he had had to cross himself, so here he had to press her hand, sigh, and say: "Believe me!" And so he did. And, having done that, he felt that the result achieved was the desired one: that he was moved and she was moved.

"Come while it hasn't started yet; I must talk with you," said the widow. "Give me your arm."

Pyotr Ivanovich offered her his arm, and they went to the inner rooms, past Schwartz, who winked mournfully at Pyotr Ivanovich: "There goes our vint! Don't complain if we take another partner. Unless you join us as a fifth when you get free," said his playful glance.

Pyotr Ivanovich sighed still more deeply and mournfully, and Praskovya Fyodorovna gratefully pressed his arm. Having gone into her drawing room, upholstered in pink cretonne and with a sullen lamp, they sat by the table, she on the sofa, Pyotr Ivanovich on a low pouf with bad springs that gave way erratically under his weight. Praskovya Fyodorovna wanted to warn him that he should sit on another chair, but she found such a warning inconsistent with her position and changed her mind. As he sat down on this pouf, Pyotr Ivanovich recalled how Ivan Ilyich had decorated this drawing room and had consulted him about this same cretonne, pink with green leaves. Passing by the table and sitting down on the sofa (generally the whole drawing room was filled with knickknacks and furniture), the widow caught the black lace of her black mantilla on the carving of the table. Pyotr Ivanovich got up to release it, and the pouf, freed from under him, roused itself and gave him a shove. The widow began to release the lace herself, and Pyotr Ivanovich sat down again, crushing the rebellious pouf under him. But the widow did not release it completely, and Pyotr Ivanovich got up again, and again the pouf rebelled and even gave a snap. When all this was over, she took out a clean cambric handkerchief and began to cry. The episode with the lace and the struggle with the pouf cooled Pyotr Ivanovich down, and he sat scowling. This awkward situation was interrupted by Sokolov, Ivan Ilyich's butler, with the report that the plot in the cemetery chosen by Praskovya Fyodorovna would cost two hundred roubles. She stopped crying and, glancing at Pyotr Ivanovich with the air of a victim, said in French that it was very hard for her. Pyotr Ivanovich made a silent gesture expressing the unquestionable conviction that it could not be otherwise.

"Smoke, please," she said in a magnanimous and at the same time brokenhearted voice, and she began to discuss the question of the price of the plot with Sokolov. Pyotr Ivanovich, lighting up, heard her asking in great detail about the prices of various plots and determining which should be taken. Besides that, having finished about the plot, she also gave orders about the choir. Sokolov left.

"I do everything myself," she said to Pyotr Ivanovich, pushing aside the albums that lay on the table; and, noticing that the table was threatened with ashes, she promptly moved an ashtray for Pyotr Ivanovich and said: "I find it false to claim that grief prevents me from concerning myself with practical matters. On the contrary, if anything can, not comfort... but distract me, it is my troubles over him." She took out her handkerchief again as if she was

about to cry, but suddenly, as if overcoming herself, gave a shake and began to speak calmly:

“However, I have business with you.”

Pyotr Ivanovich bowed, not allowing the springs of the pouf, which at once began stirring under him, to act up.

“During the last days he suffered terribly.”

“He suffered very much?” asked Pyotr Ivanovich.

“Ah, terribly! The last, not minutes, but hours, he didn’t stop screaming. For three days in a row he screamed incessantly. It was unbearable. I can’t understand how I endured it. It could be heard through three doors. Ah! what I’ve endured!”

“And can it be that he was conscious?” asked Pyotr Ivanovich.

“Yes,” she whispered, “till the last moment. He said farewell to us a quarter of an hour before he died, and also asked that Volodya be taken away.”

The thought of the suffering of a man he had known so closely, first as a merry boy, a schoolmate, then as an adult colleague, despite the unpleasant awareness of his own and this woman’s falsity, suddenly terrified Pyotr Ivanovich. He again saw that forehead, the nose pressing on the upper lip, and he felt afraid for himself.

“Three days of terrible suffering and then death. Why, that could come for me, too, right now, any minute,” he thought, and he was momentarily afraid. But at once, he did not know how himself, the usual thought came to his aid, that this had happened to Ivan Ilyich and not to him, and that it should and could not happen to him, that in thinking so he had succumbed to a gloomy mood, which ought not to be done, as was obvious from Schwartz’s face. And having reasoned thus, Pyotr Ivanovich calmed down and began asking with interest about the details of Ivan Ilyich’s end, as if death was an occurrence proper only to Ivan Ilyich, but not at all to him.

After various discussions of the details of the truly terrible physical sufferings endured by Ivan Ilyich (these details Pyotr Ivanovich learned only by the effect of Ivan Ilyich’s sufferings on Praskovya Fyodorovna’s nerves), the widow evidently found it necessary to proceed to business.

“Ah, Pyotr Ivanovich, it’s so hard, so terribly hard, so terribly hard,” and she began to cry again.

Pyotr Ivanovich sighed and waited while she blew her nose. When she finished blowing her nose, he said:

“Believe me...” and again she fell to talking and told him what was evidently her main business with him; this business consisted in the question of how to obtain money from the treasury on the occasion of her husband’s death. She made it seem that she was asking Pyotr Ivanovich’s advice about a pension; but he saw that she already knew in the minutest detail things that he did not know, such as all that could be squeezed out of the treasury on the occasion of this death; but that she would like to find out whether it was not possible somehow to squeeze out more. Pyotr Ivanovich tried to think up some way, but, having thought a little and, for decency’s sake, having scolded our government for its stinginess, he said it seemed that more was impossible. Then she sighed and obviously began thinking up some way to get rid of her visitor. He understood that, put out his cigarette, got up, pressed her hand, and went to the front hall.

In the dining room with the clock that Ivan Ilyich was so happy to have bought in an antiques shop, Pyotr Ivanovich met a priest and several more acquaintances who had come for the service, and noticed a beautiful young lady of his acquaintance, Ivan Ilyich’s daughter. She was all in black. Her waist, which was very slender, seemed more slender still. She had a gloomy, resolute, almost wrathful look. She bowed to Pyotr Ivanovich as if he were to blame for something. Behind the daughter, with the same offended look, stood a rich young man of Pyotr Ivanovich’s acquaintance, an examining magistrate, her fiancé as he had heard. He bowed to them dolefully and was about to go into the dead man’s room, when from under the stairs appeared the little figure of Ivan Ilyich’s schoolboy son, who looked terribly like him. He was a little Ivan Ilyich, as Pyotr Ivanovich remembered him from law school. His eyes were tearful and such as are found in impure boys of thirteen or fourteen. The boy, noticing Pyotr Ivanovich, began to scowl sternly and bashfully. Pyotr Ivanovich nodded to him and went into the dead man’s room. The service began—candles, moans, incense, tears, sobs. Pyotr Ivanovich stood frowning, looking at the feet in front of him. He did not glance once at the dead man and throughout did not succumb to weakening influences and was one of the first to leave. There was no one in the front hall. Gerasim, the butler’s helper, sprang out of the dead man’s room, rummaged with his strong hands through all the fur coats to find Pyotr Ivanovich’s coat, and held it for him.

“Well, brother Gerasim?” said Pyotr Ivanovich, just to say something. “A pity, isn’t it?”

“It’s God’s will. We’ll all come to it some day,” said Gerasim, baring his white, even row of muzhik’s teeth, and, like a man in the heat of hard work, briskly opened the door, hailed the coachman, helped Pyotr Ivanovich in, and sprang back to the porch, as if thinking about what else he might do.

Pyotr Ivanovich found it especially pleasant to breathe fresh air after the smell of incense, corpse, and carbolic acid.

“Where to?” asked the coachman.

“It’s not late. I can still go to Fyodor Vassilievich’s.”

And Pyotr Ivanovich went. And indeed he found them at the end of the first rubber, so that it was timely for him to step in as a fifth.

II

THE PAST HISTORY of Ivan Ilyich's life was most simple and ordinary and most terrible.

Ivan Ilyich died at the age of forty-five, a member of the Court of Law. He was the son of an official who had made a career in Petersburg in various ministries and departments, of the sort that brings people to a position in which, though it becomes clear that they are unfit to perform any sort of substantial duties, still, because of their long past service and rank, they cannot be dismissed, and therefore they receive invented, fictitious posts and non-fictitious thousands, from six to ten, on which they live to a ripe old age.

Such was the privy councillor, the unnecessary member of various unnecessary institutions, Ilya Yefimovich Golovin.

He had three sons. Ivan Ilyich was the second son. The eldest had made the same sort of career as his father, only in a different ministry, and was already drawing near that age in the service at which this salaried inertia is attained. The third son was a failure. He had spoiled things for himself in various places and was now serving with the railways; his father and brothers, and especially their wives, not only did not like meeting him, but, unless from the utmost necessity, did not even remember his existence. The sister was married to Baron Greff, the same sort of Petersburg official as his father-in-law. Ivan Ilyich was *le phénix de la famille*,* as they said. He was not as cold and meticulous as the elder and not as desperate as the younger. He was between the two-an intelligent, lively, pleasant, and decent man. He was educated together with his younger brother in law school. The younger brother did not finish and was expelled from the fifth class. Ivan Ilyich finished his studies successfully. In law school he was already what he would be throughout his later life: a capable man, cheerfully good-natured and gregarious, but strict in fulfilling what he considered his duty; and he considered his duty all that was so considered by highly placed people. He was not ingratiating, either as a boy or later as an adult, but, from the earliest age he had had this quality of being drawn, as a fly is to light, to the most highly placed people in society, of adopting their manners, their views of life, and of establishing friendly relations with them. All the passions of childhood and youth went by without leaving big traces on him; he had been given to sensuality and vanity and-towards the end, in the upper classes-to liberalism,

but it was all within certain limits, which were correctly pointed out to him by his instinct.

In law school he had committed acts which had formerly seemed to him of great vileness and had inspired a feeling of self-loathing in him at the time he committed them; but subsequently, seeing that such acts were also committed by highly placed people and were not considered bad, he, without really thinking them good, forgot all about them and was not troubled in the least by the memory of them.

On leaving law school in the tenth rank² and receiving money from his father to outfit himself, Ivan ordered clothes from Charmeur,³ hung a little medal on his watch chain inscribed *respice finem*,* took his leave of prince and tutor, dined with his schoolmates at Donon's,⁴ and with a fashionable new trunk, linen, clothes, shaving and toiletry kits, and a plaid, ordered and purchased at the very best shops, left for the provinces to take a post as official on special missions for the governor, which his father had procured for him.

In the provinces Ivan Ilyich immediately arranged as easy and pleasant a situation for himself as his situation in law school had been. He served, made his career, and at the same time amused himself pleasantly and decently; from time to time his superiors sent him on missions to various districts, and he behaved himself with dignity with both those above him and those beneath him, and with precision and incorruptible honesty, which he could not but be proud of, he carried out the missions he was charged with, mostly to do with the Old Believers.⁵

In matters of service, despite his youth and inclination for light merriment, he was extremely restrained, official, and even stern; but socially he was often playful and witty, and always good-natured, decent, and *bon enfant*,† as his superior and his wife, with whom he was like one of the family, used to say of him.

There was a liaison in the provinces with one of the ladies who fastened upon the foppish lawyer; there was also a milliner; there were drinking parties with traveling imperial adjutants, and little trips to a remote back street after supper; there was also subservience to his superior and even to the superior's wife; but it all bore such a lofty tone of propriety that it could not be called by any bad words: it all merely fell under the rubric of the French saying: *Il faut que jeunesse se passe*.* It was all done with clean hands, in clean shirts, with French words, and above all in the highest society,

consequently with the approval of highly placed people.

So Ivan Ilyich served for five years, and then came changes in the service. New legal institutions appeared; new people were needed.⁶

And Ivan Ilyich became this new man.

Ivan Ilyich was offered a post as examining magistrate, and Ivan Ilyich accepted it, though this post was in another province and he had to abandon the relations he had established and establish new ones. Ivan Ilyich's friends saw him off, had a group photograph taken, offered him a silver cigarette case, and he left for his new post.

As an examining magistrate, Ivan Ilyich was just as *comme il faut*, decent, capable of separating his duties from his private life and of inspiring general respect as he had been as an official on special missions. The work of an examining magistrate was itself far more interesting and attractive for Ivan Ilyich than his previous work. In his previous work, he had found it pleasant to walk at an easy pace, in an undress uniform from Charmeur's, past trembling petitioners waiting to be received and officials envious of him, straight to the superior's office, and sit down with him for tea and a cigarette; but there had been few people directly dependent on his will. Of such people there had been only police officers and Old Believers, when he was sent on special missions; and he had liked to treat such people, who were dependent on him, courteously, almost in a comradely fashion, had liked to let them feel that here was he, who had the power to crush them, treating them in a simple, friendly way. There had been few such people then. Now, though, as an examining magistrate, Ivan Ilyich felt that everyone, everyone without exception, the most important, the most self-satisfied people-everyone was in his hands, and he needed only to write certain words on paper with a letterhead, and this important, self-satisfied man would be brought to him as an accused person or a witness, and, if he was not of a mind to let him sit down, the man would stand before him and answer his questions. Ivan Ilyich never misused this power of his; on the contrary, he tried to soften its expression; but for him the consciousness of this power and the possibility of softening it constituted the main interest and attraction of his new work. In that work itself, namely in examinations, Ivan Ilyich very quickly adopted the method of pushing away from himself all circumstances not concerned with service, and investing even the most complicated case in such a form that, on paper, the case was reflected only in its external aspects and his personal views were entirely excluded, and, above all, the required formality was fully

observed. This was a new thing. And he was one of the first people to work out the practical application of the statutes of 1864.

Having moved to a new town in the post of examining magistrate, Ivan Ilyich made new acquaintances, connections, behaved in a new way, and adopted a somewhat different tone. He placed himself at a certain dignified remove from the provincial authorities, but chose the best circle of magistrates and rich nobility living in the town, and adopted a tone of slight dissatisfaction with the government, moderate liberalism, and a civilized sense of citizenship. At the same time, without changing his elegant dress in the least, Ivan Ilyich, given his new duties, stopped shaving his chin and gave his beard the freedom to grow where it liked.

Ivan Ilyich's life came together very pleasantly in this new town as well: the society that cast aspersions at the governor was close-knit and agreeable; his salary was higher, and no little pleasure was added to his life by whist, which Ivan Ilyich began to play, having a capacity for playing cards cheerfully, for calculating quickly and subtly, so that generally he always came out the winner.

After two years of service in the new town, Ivan Ilyich met his future wife. Praskovya Fyodorovna Mikhel was the most attractive, intelligent, and brilliant girl of that circle in which Ivan Ilyich moved. Among other amusements and rests from his labors as a magistrate, Ivan Ilyich established light and playful relations with Praskovya Fyodorovna.

Ivan Ilyich, when an official on special missions, had generally danced; now, being an examining magistrate, he danced only as an exception. He now danced in the sense that, while belonging to the new institutions and of the fifth rank,⁷ if it comes to dancing, I can demonstrate that in that line I can do better than others. So, from time to time, at the end of an evening, he danced with Praskovya Fyodorovna, and it was mostly during that dancing that he won Praskovya Fyodorovna's heart. She fell in love with him. Ivan Ilyich had no clear, definite intention of marrying, but when the girl fell in love with him, he put the question to himself. "In fact, why not get married?" he said to himself.

Miss Praskovya Fyodorovna was of good noble stock and not bad looking; there was a bit of money. Ivan Ilyich might have counted on a more brilliant match, but this match was also good. Ivan Ilyich had his salary; she, he hoped, would have as much. A good family; she was a sweet, pretty, and perfectly respectable woman. To say that Ivan Ilyich married because he

loved his bride and found her sympathetic to his view of life would be as incorrect as to say that he married because people of his society approved of this match. Ivan Ilyich married out of both considerations: he did something pleasant for himself in acquiring such a wife, and at the same time he did what highly placed people considered right.

And so Ivan Ilyich got married.

The process of marriage itself and the initial time of married life, with its conjugal caresses, new furniture, new dishes, new linen, went so well until his wife's pregnancy that Ivan Ilyich was already beginning to think that marriage not only would not disrupt that character of life-easy, pleasant, merry, and always decent and approved of by society-which Ivan Ilyich considered the very essence of life, but would even add to it. But then, with the first months of his wife's pregnancy, there appeared something new, unanticipated, unpleasant, painful, and indecent, which it had been impossible to anticipate and which it was impossible to get rid of.

His wife, without any cause, as it seemed to Ivan Ilyich, *de gaieté de coeur*,* as he said to himself, began to disrupt the pleasantness and decency of life: she became jealous over him without any reason, demanded that he court her, found fault with everything, and made unpleasant and crude scenes.

At first Ivan Ilyich hoped to free himself from the unpleasantness of this situation by that same easy and decent attitude towards life which had rescued him before-he tried to ignore his wife's state of mind and went on living as easily and pleasantly as before: invited friends to make up a game, tried to get away himself to the club or to see colleagues. But one time his wife began to abuse him so energetically in crude terms, and so stubbornly went on abusing him each time he did not fulfill her demands, obviously firmly resolved not to stop until he submitted, that is, sat at home and was just as bored as she was, that Ivan Ilyich became terrified. He realized that marital life-at least with his wife-was not always conducive to the pleasantness and decency of life, but, on the contrary, often disrupted them, and that it was therefore necessary to protect himself against these disruptions. And Ivan Ilyich began to search for ways of doing that. His work was the one thing that commanded Praskovya Fyodorovna's respect, and Ivan Ilyich, by means of his work and the duties it entailed, began to struggle with his wife, fencing off his independent world.

With the birth of the child, the attempts at nursing and various failures at

it, with illnesses, real and imaginary, of the child and the mother, in which it was demanded that he participate, but in which he could understand nothing, Ivan Ilyich's need to fence off a world for himself outside the family became still more imperative.

As his wife became more irritable and demanding, Ivan Ilyich transferred the center of gravity of his life to his work. He came to like his work more and became more ambitious than he had been before.

Very soon, not more than a year after his marriage, Ivan Ilyich understood that marital life, while offering certain conveniences, was essentially a very complex and difficult affair, with regard to which, in order to fulfill one's duty, that is, to lead a decent life approved of by society, one had to work out a certain attitude, as one did to one's work.

And Ivan Ilyich did work out such an attitude to marital life. He demanded of marital life only those comforts of dinner at home, housekeeping, bed, which it could give him, and, above all, that decency of external forms which was defined by public opinion. In the rest he sought a cheerful pleasantness, and if he found it, he was very grateful; if he met with resistance and peevishness, he at once retired to his own separate, fenced-off world of work and found pleasantness in it.

Ivan Ilyich was valued for his good service and three years later was appointed assistant prosecutor. The new duties, their importance, the possibility of calling anyone into court and putting him in jail, the public speeches, the success Ivan Ilyich had in these things-all this attracted him still more to his work.

Children came. His wife was growing more and more peevish and angry, but the attitude to domestic life worked out by Ivan Ilyich made him almost impervious to her peevishness.

After serving for seven years in the same town, Ivan Ilyich was transferred to the post of prosecutor in a different province. They moved, there was too little money, and his wife did not like the place they moved to. The salary was higher than previously, but life was more expensive; besides, two of the children died, and therefore family life became still more unpleasant for Ivan Ilyich.

Praskovya Fyodorovna blamed her husband for all the misfortunes that occurred in this new place of living. Most of the subjects of conversation between husband and wife, especially the children's education, led to problems that were reminiscent of quarrels, and quarrels were ready to flare

up at any moment. There remained only rare periods of amorousness that came over the spouses, but they did not last long. These were islands that they would land on temporarily, but then they would put out again to the sea of concealed enmity that expressed itself in estrangement from each other. This estrangement might have upset Ivan Ilyich, if he had considered that it ought not to be so, but by now he took this situation not only as normal, but as the goal of his activity in the family. His goal consisted in freeing himself more and more from these unpleasantnesses and in giving them a character of harmlessness and decency; and he achieved it by spending less and less time with his family, and when he was forced to do so, he tried to secure his position by the presence of outsiders. The main thing was that Ivan Ilyich had his work. The whole interest of life was concentrated for him in the world of his work. And this interest absorbed him. The consciousness of his power, the possibility of destroying any man he wanted to destroy, his importance, even externally, as he entered the court or met with subordinates, his success before his superiors and subordinates, and, above all, his skill in pleading cases, which he was aware of—all this was a cause for joy, and, along with friends, dinners, and whist, filled his life. So that generally the life of Ivan Ilyich continued to go as he thought it should go: pleasantly and decently.

He lived that way for another seven years. The eldest daughter was already sixteen, one more child had died, and there remained the young schoolboy, a subject of contention. Ivan Ilyich wanted to send him to law school, but Praskovya Fyodorovna, to spite him, sent him to preparatory school. The daughter studied at home and was growing up nicely; the boy was also not a bad student.

III

SO WENT Ivan Ilyich's life during the seventeen years following his marriage. He was already a seasoned prosecutor, who had turned down several transfers in expectation of a more desirable post, when a certain unpleasant circumstance unexpectedly occurred, which all but disrupted the tranquillity of his life. Ivan Ilyich was expecting the post of presiding judge in a university town, but Hoppe somehow beat him out and got the post. Ivan Ilyich became irritated, reproached him, and quarreled with him and his immediate superior; he was treated with coldness and at the next promotions he was again passed over.

That was in the year 1880. That year was the hardest of Ivan Ilyich's life. In that year it turned out, on the one hand, that his salary was not enough to live on; and on the other, that everyone had forgotten him, and that what seemed to him the greatest, cruelest injustice in his regard, others saw as a perfectly ordinary matter. Even his father did not consider it his duty to help him. He felt that everyone had abandoned him, considering his position with its 3,500-rouble salary as most normal and even fortunate. He alone knew that, with the consciousness of the injustice done him, with his wife's eternal carping, and with the debts he began to run up, living beyond his means—he alone knew that his position was far from normal.

In the summer of that year, to lighten his expenses, he took a vacation and went with his wife to spend the summer in the country with Praskovya Fyodorovna's brother.

In the country, without work, Ivan Ilyich felt for the first time not merely boredom, but an unbearable anguish, and he decided that it was impossible to live like that, and that it was necessary to take decisive measures.

Having spent a sleepless night, pacing the terrace the whole time, Ivan Ilyich decided to go to Petersburg to solicit for himself, and, so as to punish *them* for not knowing how to appreciate him, to transfer to another ministry.

The next day, despite all the attempts of his wife and brother-in-law to dissuade him, he went to Petersburg.

He went with one purpose: to solicit a post with a salary of five thousand. He no longer adhered to any ministry, tendency, or kind of activity. He only needed a post, a post with five thousand, in the administration, in a bank, in the railways, in the empress Maria's institutions,⁸ even in customs, but he had

to have five thousand and to leave the ministry where they had not known how to appreciate him.

And, lo and behold, this trip of Ivan Ilyich's was crowned with astonishing, unexpected success. In Kursk an acquaintance, F. S. Ilyin, seated himself in first class and told him about a fresh telegram received by the governor of Kursk saying that there was to be an upheaval in the ministry in a few days: Ivan Semyonovich was appointed to replace Pyotr Ivanovich.

The proposed upheaval, besides its significance for Russia, had a special significance for Ivan Ilyich in that, by bringing forward a new person, Pyotr Petrovich, and, obviously, his friend Zakhar Ivanovich, it was highly favorable for Ivan Ilyich. Zakhar Ivanovich was a colleague and friend of Ivan Ilyich.

In Moscow the news was confirmed. On arriving in Petersburg, Ivan Ilyich found Zakhar Ivanovich and received the firm promise of a post in his former Ministry of Justice.

A week later he sent a telegram to his wife: "Zakhar to replace Miller I get appointment in first memorandum."

Owing to this change of personnel, Ivan Ilyich unexpectedly received an appointment in his former ministry that placed him two steps higher than his old colleagues, with a salary of five thousand, and three thousand five hundred for moving expenses. All his vexation with his former enemies and the entire ministry was forgotten, and Ivan Ilyich was completely happy.

Ivan Ilyich returned to the country cheerful, content, as he had not been for a long time. Praskovya Fyodorovna also cheered up, and a truce was concluded between them. Ivan Ilyich told her how he had been fêted in Petersburg, how all those who had been his enemies were put to shame and now fawned on him, how they envied his post, and, particularly, how loved he was in Petersburg.

Praskovya Fyodorovna listened to all this and pretended to believe it, and did not contradict him in anything, but only made plans for a new arrangement of life in the town they were moving to. And Ivan Ilyich was glad to see that those plans were his plans, that they agreed, and that his faltering life was again acquiring its true, natural character of cheerful pleasantness and decency.

Ivan Ilyich came for only a short time. On September 10th he had to take up his post, and, besides, he needed time to settle into a new place, to transport everything from the province, to buy, to order still more; in short, to

arrange things as it had been decided in his mind, and almost exactly as it had been decided in Praskovya Fyodorovna's heart.

And now that everything had arranged itself so fortunately, and he and his wife agreed in their aims, and, besides that, lived together so little, they became such friends as they had not been since the first years of their married life. Ivan Ilyich had first thought of taking his family away at once, but his sister-in-law and her husband suddenly became so especially amiable and familial towards Ivan Ilyich and his family that, at their insistence, Ivan Ilyich left alone.

Ivan Ilyich left, and the cheerful state of mind produced by his success and his agreement with his wife, the one intensifying the other, stayed with him all the while. A charming apartment was found, exactly what the husband and wife were dreaming of. Vast, high-ceilinged reception rooms in the old style, a comfortable and grandiose study, rooms for his wife and daughter, a schoolroom for his son-everything as if purposely designed for them. Ivan Ilyich himself took up the decoration, chose the wallpaper, bought furniture, especially antiques, which he had upholstered in an especially *comme il faut* style, and it all grew, grew and approached that ideal which he had formed for himself. When it was half done, the result exceeded his expectations. He perceived what a *comme il faut*, exquisite, and by no means banal character it would all take on when it was finished. Falling asleep, he imagined how the reception room was going to be. Looking at the as yet unfinished drawing room, he already saw the fireplace, the screen, the whatnot, and those little chairs scattered around, those dishes and plates on the walls, and the bronzes, when they were all put in place. He rejoiced at the thought of how he would astonish Pasha and Lizanka, who also had a taste for these things. They would never expect it. In particular, he managed to find and buy cheaply antique objects that endowed everything with a particularly noble character. In his letters he deliberately presented everything as worse than it was, in order to astonish them. All this occupied him so much that even his new duties, fond as he was of the work, occupied him less than he had expected. During sessions he had moments of distraction: he was pondering what sort of cornices to have for the curtains, straight or festooned. He was so taken up with it that he often pottered about himself, even moved furniture and rehung curtains himself. Once he climbed a ladder to show the uncomprehending upholsterer how he wanted the drapery done, missed his footing, and fell, but, being a strong and agile man, held on and only bumped

his side on the knob of the window frame. The bruised place ached for a while, but soon stopped. All this time Ivan Ilyich felt especially cheerful and healthy. He wrote: "I feel as if I've shaken off fifteen years." He hoped to finish in September, but it took until the middle of October. The result was charming-as not only he said, but all those who saw it said to him.

Essentially, though, it was the same as with all people who are not exactly rich, but who want to resemble the rich, and for that reason only resemble each other: damasks, ebony, flowers, carpets, and bronzes, dark and gleaming-all that all people of a certain kind acquire in order to resemble all people of a certain kind. And in his case the resemblance was such that it was even impossible for it to attract attention; but to him it all seemed something special. When he met his family at the railway station, brought them to his brightly lit, finished apartment, and a footman in a white tie opened the door to the flower-decked front hall, and they then went on to the drawing room, the study, and gasped with pleasure-he was very happy, showed them all around, drank in their praises, and beamed with pleasure. That same evening, over tea, when Praskovya Fyodorovna asked him, among other things, how he had fallen, he laughed and acted out how he had gone flying and frightened the upholsterer.

"It's not for nothing I'm a gymnast. Another man might have been badly hurt, but I just got a slight knock here; it hurts when you touch it, but it's already going away; a simple bruise."

And they began to live in their new lodgings, in which, as always, once they had settled nicely, there was just one room lacking, and on their new means, which, as always, were lacking just a little-some five hundred roubles-and it was very nice. Especially nice was the initial time, when all was not arranged yet and still needed arranging: this to buy, that to order, this to move, that to adjust. Though there were some disagreements between husband and wife, they were both so content and there was so much to do that it all ended without any big quarrels. When there was nothing more to arrange, it became slightly boring and lacking in something, but by then they were making acquaintances, habits, and life became full.

Ivan Ilyich, having spent the morning in court, would come home for dinner, and in the initial time his state of mind was good, though it did suffer slightly on account of the lodgings. (Each spot on the tablecloth, on the damask, a torn-out curtain pull, annoyed him: he had put so much labor into arranging it that any damage was painful to him.) But in general Ivan Ilyich's

life went on as he believed life ought to go: easily, pleasantly, and decently. He got up at nine, had coffee, read the newspaper, then put on his uniform and went to court. There the yoke in which he worked was already broken in; he fell into it at once. The petitioners, the inquiries in the chancery, the chancery itself, the court sessions-public and administrative. In all this one had to know how to exclude all that was raw, vital-which always disrupts the regular flow of official business; one had to allow no relations with people apart from official ones, and the cause of the relations must be only official and the relations themselves only official. For instance, a man comes and wishes to find something out. As an unofficial man Ivan Ilyich can have no relations with such a man; but if there are relations with this man as a colleague, such as can be expressed on paper with a letterhead, then within the limits of those relations Ivan Ilyich does everything, decidedly everything he can, and with that observes a semblance of friendly human relations, that is, of politeness. As soon as the official relations are ended, all others are ended as well. This skill in separating the official side, not mixing it with his real life, Ivan Ilyich had mastered in the highest degree and through long practice and talent had developed to such a degree that, like a virtuoso, he sometimes allowed himself, as if jokingly, to mix human and official relations. He allowed himself that because he felt himself always capable of separating the official when he needed to and of discarding the human. For Ivan Ilyich this business went not only easily, pleasantly, and decently, but even with virtuosity. During recesses he smoked, drank tea, conversed a little about politics, a little about general matters, a little about cards, and most of all about promotions. And, weary, but with the feeling of a virtuoso who has given a perfect performance of his part as one of the first violins in the orchestra, he returned home. At home, the daughter and mother had been out somewhere or had someone else with them; the son had been to school, had prepared his lessons with his tutors, and was diligently studying what they teach in school. All was well. After dinner, if there were no visitors, Ivan Ilyich sometimes read a book which was being much talked about, and in the evening he sat down to work, that is, read papers, consulted the laws-compared testimony and applied the laws to it. For him this was neither boring nor amusing. It was boring when there might have been a game of vint; but if there was no vint, it was still better than sitting alone or with his wife. But Ivan Ilyich's real pleasure was in little dinners, to which he invited ladies and gentlemen of important social position and passed the time with

them similarly to the way such people usually pass the time, just as his drawing room was similar to all other drawing rooms.

Once they even had a *soirée* with dancing. And Ivan Ilyich was merry, and everything was nice, only a big quarrel broke out with his wife over the cakes and sweets. Praskovya Fyodorovna had her own plan, but Ivan Ilyich insisted on buying everything from an expensive pastry shop, and he bought a lot of cakes, and the quarrel was about the fact that there were cakes left over and the bill from the pastry shop was for forty-five roubles. The quarrel was big and unpleasant, and Praskovya Fyodorovna called him “fool” and “slouch.” And he clutched his head and angrily said something about divorce. But the *soirée* itself was merry. The best society was there, and Ivan Ilyich danced with Princess Trufonov, the sister of the one famous for founding the society “Quench Thou My Grief.” The official joys were the joys of self-esteem; the social joys were the joys of vainglory; but Ivan Ilyich’s real joys were the joys of playing vint. He admitted that after anything, after whatever joyless events there might be in his life, the joy which, like a candle, burned before all others—was to sit down to vint with good players and soft-spoken partners, a foursome without fail (with a fivesome it was very painful to sit out, though one always pretended to like it), and to carry on an intelligent, serious game (when the cards came your way), then have supper and drink a glass of wine. And Ivan Ilyich went to bed in an especially good humor after vint, especially when he had won a little (to win a lot was unpleasant).

So they lived. The social circle that formed around them was of the best sort; they were visited by important people and by young people.

In their view of the circle of their acquaintances, husband, wife, and daughter agreed completely and, without prearrangement, in the same way fended off and freed themselves from various friends and relations, ragtag people, who came flying with tender feelings to their drawing room with the Japanese dishes on the walls. Soon these ragtag friends stopped flying, and the Golovins remained surrounded by only the best society. Young men courted Lizanka, and Petrishchev, the son of Dmitri Ivanovich Petrishchev and sole heir to his fortune, an examining magistrate, began courting Liza, so that Ivan Ilyich even mentioned it to Praskovya Fyodorovna: perhaps they should arrange a ride together in a troika, or organize theatricals. So they lived. And it all went on like this without change, and it was all very well.

IV

THEY WERE all in good health. It could not be called ill health that Ivan Ilyich sometimes said he had a strange taste in his mouth and some discomfort on the left side of his stomach.

But it so happened that this discomfort began to increase and turn, not into pain yet, but into the consciousness of a constant heaviness in his side and into ill humor. This ill humor, growing stronger and stronger, began to spoil the pleasantness of the easy and decent life that had just been established in the Golovin family. The husband and wife began to quarrel more and more often, and soon the ease and pleasantness fell away, and decency alone was maintained with difficulty. Scenes again became frequent. Again only little islands were left, and few of them, where the husband and wife could come together without an explosion.

And now Praskovya Fyodorovna could say, not without grounds, that her husband had a difficult character. With the habit of exaggeration typical of her, she said that he had always had a terrible character, and it had needed all her goodness to put up with it for twenty years. It was true that the quarrels now began with him. His carping always began just before dinner and often precisely as he was beginning to eat, over the soup. He would point out that something was wrong with one of the plates, or that the food was not right, or that his son had his elbow on the table, or it was his daughter's hairstyle. And he blamed Praskovya Fyodorovna for it all. At first Praskovya Fyodorovna protested and said unpleasant things to him, but twice at the start of dinner he flew into such a rage that she realized it was a morbid condition provoked in him by the taking of food, and she restrained herself; she no longer protested, but only hurried with dinner. Her restraint Praskovya Fyodorovna set down to her own great credit. Having decided that her husband had a terrible character and made her life miserable, she began to pity herself. And the more she pitied herself, the more she hated her husband. She began to wish for his death, yet she could not wish for it, because then there would be no salary. And that irritated her against him still more. She considered herself dreadfully wretched precisely in that even his death could not save her, and she became irritated, concealed it, and this concealed irritation of hers increased his irritation.

After one scene in which Ivan Ilyich was particularly unfair and after

which, talking it over with her, he said that he was in fact irritable, but that it was from illness, she told him that, if he was ill, he ought to be treated, and demanded that he go to a famous doctor.

He went. It was all as he expected; it was all as it is always done. The waiting, and the assumed doctorly importance familiar to him, the same that he knew in himself in court, and the tapping, and the auscultation, and the questions calling for predetermined and obviously unnecessary answers, and the significant air, which suggested that you just submit to us, and we will arrange it all—we know indubitably how to arrange it all, all in the same way as for anybody you like. It was all exactly the same as in court. As he put on airs before the accused in court, so the famous doctor put on airs before him.

The doctor said: Such-and-such indicates that there is such-and-such inside you; but if that is not confirmed by the analysis of this-and-that, then it must be assumed that you have such-and-such. If we presume such-and-such, then... and so on. For Ivan Ilyich only one question mattered: was his condition dangerous or not? But the doctor ignored this inappropriate question. From the doctor's point of view it was an idle question and not to be discussed; there existed only the weighing of probabilities—a floating kidney, chronic catarrh, or appendicitis. It was not a question of Ivan Ilyich's life, but an argument between a floating kidney and the appendix. And before Ivan Ilyich's very eyes the doctor resolved this argument most brilliantly in favor of the appendix, with the reservation that the urine analysis might give new evidence and the case would then be reconsidered. All this was just exactly what Ivan Ilyich himself had performed as brilliantly a thousand times over the accused. The doctor performed his summing up just as brilliantly, and triumphantly, even merrily, glanced over his spectacles at the accused. From the doctor's summing up, Ivan Ilyich drew the conclusion that things were bad, and that for him, the doctor, and for anyone else you like, it was all the same, but for him things were bad. And this conclusion struck Ivan Ilyich painfully, calling up in him a feeling of great pity for himself and great anger at this doctor, who was indifferent to such an important question.

But he said nothing, got up, put money on the table, and sighed.

"We sick people probably often ask you inappropriate questions," he said. "But, generally, is it a dangerous illness or not?..."

The doctor glanced at him sternly with one eye through his spectacles, as if to say: Accused, if you do not keep within the limits of the questions put to you, I will be forced to order you removed from the court.

“I’ve already told you what I consider necessary and appropriate,” said the doctor. “The analysis will give further evidence.” And the doctor bowed.

Ivan Ilyich went out slowly, climbed dejectedly into the sleigh, and drove home. On the way he kept going over what the doctor had said, trying to translate all those complicated, vague scientific terms into simple language and read in them the answer to the question: bad-is it very bad for me, or still all right? And it seemed to him that the sense of everything the doctor had said was that it was very bad. Everything seemed sad to Ivan Ilyich in the streets. The cabbies were sad, the houses were sad, the passersby and the shops were sad. And that pain, the obscure, gnawing pain, which did not cease for a moment, seemed to have acquired, in connection with the doctor’s vague words, a different, more serious meaning. With a new, heavy feeling Ivan Ilyich now paid heed to it.

He came home and started telling his wife. His wife listened, but in the middle of his account his daughter came in with her hat on: she and her mother were going somewhere. She forced herself to sit down and listen to this boredom, but could not stand it for long, and the mother did not hear him out.

“Well, I’m very glad,” said his wife, “so now see to it that you take your medicine regularly. Give me the prescription, I’ll send Gerasim to the pharmacy.” And she went to get dressed.

He could not breathe freely while she was in the room and sighed heavily when she left.

“Oh, well,” he said. “Maybe in fact it’s all right...”

He began to take medicines, following the doctor’s prescriptions, which were changed on account of the urine analysis. But then it just so happened that, in this analysis and in what should have followed from it, there was some sort of confusion. It was impossible to reach the doctor himself, and meanwhile what was being done was not what the doctor had said to him. He either forgot, or lied, or was hiding something from him.

But all the same Ivan Ilyich started following the prescriptions precisely and in following them found comfort at first.

Ivan Ilyich’s main occupation since the time of his visit to the doctor became the precise following of the doctor’s prescriptions concerning hygiene and the taking of medicines, and paying heed to his pain and to all the functions of his organism. People’s illness and people’s health became Ivan Ilyich’s main interests. When there was talk in his presence of someone

being ill, or dying, or recovering, especially of an illness similar to his own, he listened, trying to conceal his excitement, asked questions, and made applications to his illness.

The pain did not diminish; but Ivan Ilyich tried to make himself think that he was better. And he could deceive himself as long as nothing worried him. But as soon as there was some unpleasantness with his wife, a setback at work, or bad cards at vint, he immediately felt the whole force of his illness; he used to endure these setbacks, expecting to quickly right the wrong, to overcome it, to achieve success, a grand slam. But now any setback undercut him and threw him into despair. He said to himself: I was just getting better, and the medicine was beginning to work, and here's this cursed misfortune or unpleasantness... And he became angry at the misfortune or at the people who had caused him the unpleasantness and were killing him; and he felt how this anger was killing him, but he could not repress it. It seems it ought to have been clear to him that this anger at circumstances and at people was aggravating his illness, and that therefore he should not pay attention to unpleasant occasions; but his reasoning was quite the opposite: he said that he needed peace, looked out for anything that might disturb that peace, and at the slightest disturbance became irritated. His condition was also made worse by his reading of medical books and consulting of doctors. The worsening went on so gradually that he could deceive himself comparing one day with another-the difference was so slight. But when he consulted doctors, it seemed to him that it was getting worse and even very quickly. And despite that, he constantly consulted doctors.

That month he visited yet another celebrity: the other celebrity said almost the same thing as the first, but put his questions differently. And the consultation with this celebrity only increased Ivan Ilyich's doubt and fear. The friend of a friend of his-a very good doctor-defined the illness in quite another way still and, though he promised recovery, his questions and conjectures confused Ivan Ilyich still more and increased his doubts. A homeopath defined the illness in still another way and gave him medicine, and Ivan Ilyich, in secret from everyone, took it for a week. But after a week, feeling no relief and losing confidence both in the former treatments and in this one, he fell into still greater dejection. Once a lady acquaintance told about healing with icons. Ivan Ilyich caught himself listening attentively and believing in the reality of the fact. This occasion frightened him. "Can I have grown so mentally feeble?" he said to himself. "Nonsense! It's all rubbish, I

mustn't give way to anxieties, but choose one doctor and keep strictly to his treatment. That's what I'll do. It's over now. I won't think, and I'll strictly follow the treatment till summer. Then we'll see. These vacillations are over now!..." That was easy to say, but impossible to do. The pain in his side kept gnawing at him, seemed to be increasing, becoming constant; the taste in his mouth kept becoming stranger; it seemed to him that his mouth gave off a disgusting smell, and his appetite and strength kept weakening. It was impossible to deceive himself: something dreadful, new, and so significant that nothing more significant had ever happened in his life, was being accomplished in Ivan Ilyich. And he alone knew of it. Everyone around him either did not understand or did not want to understand and thought that everything in the world was going on as before. This was what tormented Ivan Ilyich most of all. He saw that his household-mainly his wife and daughter, who were in the very heat of social life-did not understand anything, were vexed that he was so cheerless and demanding, as if he was to blame for it. Though they tried to conceal it, he saw that he was a hindrance to them, but that his wife had worked out for herself a certain attitude towards his illness and held to it regardless of what he said and did. This attitude was the following:

"You know," she would say to acquaintances, "Ivan Ilyich cannot keep strictly to the treatment he's prescribed, as all good people do. Today he takes his drops and eats what he's been told to and goes to bed on time; tomorrow suddenly, if I don't look out, he forgets to take them, eats sturgeon (which is forbidden), and stays up till one o'clock playing vint."

"Well, when was that?" Ivan Ilyich would ask with vexation. "Once at Pyotr Ivanovich's."

"And last night with Shebek."

"Anyway I couldn't sleep from pain."

"Whatever the reasons, you'll never get well like this, and you're tormenting us."

Praskovya Fyodorovna's external attitude to her husband's illness, which she voiced to others and to him, was that Ivan Ilyich himself was to blame for the illness and that this whole illness was a new unpleasantness he was causing his wife. Ivan Ilyich felt that this came from her involuntarily, but that did not make it easier for him.

In court Ivan Ilyich noticed or thought he noticed the same strange attitude towards himself: now it seemed to him that he was being eyed like

someone who would soon have to vacate his post; now his colleagues suddenly began to joke in friendly fashion about his anxieties, as if that terrible and dreadful unheard-of thing that was sitting in him and ceaselessly gnawing at him and inexorably drawing him somewhere was a most pleasant subject for jokes. Schwartz especially irritated him with his playfulness, vitality, and *comme il faut*-ishness, which reminded Ivan Ilyich of himself ten years ago.

Friends would come for a game, sit down. They dealt, flexing the new cards, sorting diamonds with diamonds, seven of them. His partner bid no trump and opened with two diamonds. What more could one wish for? It should all go cheerfully, briskly-a grand slam. And suddenly Ivan Ilyich feels that gnawing pain, that taste in his mouth, and it seems wild to him that at the same time he should rejoice at a grand slam.

He looks at Mikhail Mikhailovich, his partner, striking the table with a sanguine hand and refraining, politely and indulgently, from picking up the tricks, but moving them towards Ivan Ilyich, so as to give him the pleasure of collecting them without taking the trouble to reach out his hand. "Does he think I'm so weak that I can't reach that far?" Ivan Ilyich thinks, forgets about the trumps and double trumps his own, and loses the slam by three tricks, and most terrible of all is that he sees how Mikhail Mikhailovich suffers and it makes no difference to him. And it is terrible to think why it makes no difference to him.

Everyone sees that it is hard for him, and they say: "We can quit if you're tired. Get some rest." Rest? No, he is not the least bit tired, and they play out the rubber. Everyone is gloomy and silent. Ivan Ilyich feels that it is he who has cast this gloom over them, and he cannot disperse it. They eat supper and go home, and Ivan Ilyich is left alone with the consciousness that his life is poisoned for him and poisons life for others, and that this poison is not weakening but is permeating his whole being more and more.

And with this consciousness, along with physical pain, along with terror, he had to go to bed and often not sleep from pain for the better part of the night. And the next morning he had to get up, dress, go to court, talk, write, and if he did not go, stay at home with the same twenty-four hours in a day, every one of which was torture. And he had to live alone on the brink of disaster like that, without a single human being who could understand and pity him.

V

SO A MONTH went by, then two. Before the New Year his brother-in-law came to their town and stayed with them. Ivan Ilyich was in court. Praskovya Fyodorovna had gone shopping. Going into his study, he found his brother-in-law there, a healthy, sanguine fellow, unpacking his suitcase. On hearing Ivan Ilyich's footsteps, he raised his head and looked at him silently for a moment. That look revealed everything to Ivan Ilyich. The brother-in-law opened his mouth to gasp, but checked himself. This movement confirmed everything.

"What, have I changed?"

"Yes... there's a change."

And much as he tried after that to bring his brother-in-law around to talking about his external appearance, the brother-in-law would say nothing. Praskovya Fyodorovna came home, and the brother-in-law went to her. Ivan Ilyich locked the door and started looking in the mirror-full face, then profile. He picked up his portrait with his wife and compared it with what he saw in the mirror. The change was enormous. Then he bared his arms to the elbow, looked, pulled his sleeves down, sat on the ottoman, and turned darker than night.

"Don't, don't," he said to himself, jumped to his feet, went to the desk, opened a brief, started reading it, but could not. He unlocked the door, went to the reception room. The door to the drawing room was shut. He went up to it on tiptoe and started listening.

"No, you're exaggerating," Praskovya Fyodorovna was saying.

"How 'exaggerating'? Don't you see-he's a dead man, look in his eyes. No light. What's wrong with him?"

"Nobody knows. Nikolaev" (this was another doctor) "said something, but I don't know. Leshchetitsky" (this was the famous doctor) "said on the contrary..."

Ivan Ilyich stepped away, went to his room, lay down, and began to think: "A kidney, a floating kidney." He remembered all that the doctors had told him, how it had detached itself, and how it floats. By an effort of imagination he tried to catch this kidney and stop it, fasten it down; so little was needed, it seemed to him. "No, I'll go to see Pyotr Ivanovich again." (This was the friend who had the doctor friend.) He rang the bell, ordered the horse

harnessed, and made ready to go.

"Where are you off to, Jean?" his wife asked with an especially sad and unusually kind expression.

This unusual kindness angered him. He gave her a dark look.

"I must go to see Pyotr Ivanovich."

He went to see his friend who had the doctor friend. And with him to the doctor. He found him in and had a long conversation with him.

On examining the anatomical and physiological details of what, in the doctor's opinion, was going on inside him, he understood everything.

There was a little thing, a tiny little thing, in the appendix. This could all be put right. Strengthen the energy of one organ, weaken the functioning of another, absorption would take place, and all would be put right. He was a little late for dinner. He dined, talked cheerfully, but for a long while could not go and get busy. Finally he went to his study and at once sat down to work. He read briefs, worked, but the awareness that he had put off an important, intimate matter, which he would take up once he had finished, never left him. When he finished work, he remembered that this intimate matter was the thought of his appendix. But he did not give in to it, he went to the drawing room for tea. There were guests; they talked, played the piano, sang; there was the examining magistrate, their daughter's desired fiancé. Ivan Ilyich spent the evening, as Praskovya Fyodorovna remarked, more cheerfully than others, but never for a moment did he forget that he had put off the important thought of his appendix. At eleven o'clock he said good-night and went to his room. He had slept alone since the time of his illness, in a small room by his study. He went there, undressed, took a novel by Zola but did not read it, and thought. In his imagination the desired mending of the appendix was taking place. Absorption, ejection, restoration of the correct functioning. "Yes, that's all so," he said to himself. "One need only assist nature." He remembered about his medicine, got up, took it, and lay on his back, waiting to feel the beneficial effect of the medicine and how it killed the pain. "Just take it regularly and avoid harmful influences; even now I feel a little better, a lot better." He began to touch his side-it did not hurt. "Yes, I don't feel it, truly, it's already much better." He put out the candle and lay on his side... The appendix was mending, absorbing. Suddenly he felt the old familiar, dull, gnawing pain, stubborn, quiet, serious. In his mouth the same familiar vileness. His heart shrank, his head clouded. "My God, my God!" he said. "Again, again, and it will never stop." And suddenly he pictured the

matter from an entirely different side. "The appendix! The kidney!" he said to himself. "This is not a matter of the appendix or the kidney, but of life and... death. Yes, there was life, and now it is going, going, and I cannot hold it back. Yes, why deceive myself? Isn't it obvious to everybody except me that I'm dying and it is only a question of the number of weeks, days-right now, maybe. Once there was light, now there's darkness. Once I was here, and now I'll be there! Where?" Cold came over him, his breath stopped. He heard only the pounding of his heart.

"There will be no me, so what will there be? There will be nothing. So where will I be, when there's no me? Can this be death? No, I don't want it." He jumped up, wanted to light a candle, felt around with trembling hands, dropped the candle and candlestick on the floor, and fell back on the pillow again. "What for? It makes no difference," he said to himself, gazing wide-eyed into the darkness. "Death. Yes, death. And none of them knows, or wants to know, or feels pity. They're playing." (He heard through the door the distant roll of a voice and ritornello.) "It makes no difference to them, but they'll also die. Fools. For me sooner, for them later; but it will be the same for them. Yet they make merry. Brutes!" He was choking with anger. And he felt tormentingly, unbearably oppressed. It just can't be that everyone has always been condemned to this terrible fear. He sat up.

"Something's not right. I must calm down; I must think it over from the beginning." And so he began to think it over. "Yes, the beginning of the illness. I bumped my side, and then I was just the same, that day and the next; it ached a little, then more, then doctors, then dejection, anguish, doctors again; and I was coming closer and closer to the abyss. Losing strength. Closer and closer. And here I am wasted away, there's no light in my eyes. It's death, yet I think about my appendix. I think about repairing my appendix, yet it's death. Can it be death?" Again terror came over him, he gasped for breath, bent down, began searching for the matches, leaned his elbow on the night table. It hindered him and hurt him, he became angry with it, vexedly leaned still harder, and the night table fell over. In despair, suffocating, he fell on his back, expecting death at once.

The guests were just leaving. Praskovya Fyodorovna was seeing them off. She heard something fall and came in.

"What's the matter?"

"Nothing. I tipped it over by accident."

She went out and came back with a candle. He was lying there, breathing

heavily and very rapidly, like a man who has run a mile, looking at her with a fixed gaze.

“What’s the matter, Jean?”

“Nothing. I tipped it over.” (“No use talking. She won’t understand,” he thought.)

In fact she did not understand. She picked up the night table, lit the candle, and left hastily: she had to see off a lady guest.

When she returned, he was lying on his back in the same way, looking up.

“What is it, are you worse?”

“Yes.”

She shook her head and sat down.

“You know, Jean, I think we ought to invite Leshchetitsky to the house.”

This meant inviting the famous doctor and not minding the cost. He smiled venomously and said: “No.” She sat for a while, went over, and kissed him on the forehead.

He hated her with all the forces of his soul while she was kissing him, and had a hard time not pushing her away.

“Good night. God grant you fall asleep.”

“Yes.”

VI

IVAN ILYICH SAW that he was dying, and he was in continual despair.

In the depths of his soul Ivan Ilyich knew that he was dying, but not only was he not accustomed to it, he simply did not, he could not possibly understand it.

The example of a syllogism he had studied in Kiesewetter's logic⁹-Caius is a man, men are mortal, therefore Caius is mortal-had seemed to him all his life to be correct only in relation to Caius, but by no means to himself. For the man Caius, man in general, it was perfectly correct; but he was not Caius and not man in general, he had always been quite, quite separate from all other beings; he was Vanya, with mamá, with papá, with Mitya and Volodya, with toys, the coachman, with a nanny, then with Katenka, with all the joys, griefs, and delights of childhood, boyhood, youth. Was it for Caius, the smell of the striped leather ball that Vanya had loved so much? Was it Caius who had kissed his mother's hand like that, and was it for Caius that the silk folds of his mother's dress had rustled like that? Was it he who had mutinied against bad food in law school? Was it Caius who had been in love like that? Was it Caius who could conduct a court session like that?

And Caius is indeed mortal, and it's right that he die, but for me, Vanya, Ivan Ilyich, with all my feelings and thoughts-for me it's another matter. And it cannot be that I should die. It would be too terrible.

So it felt to him.

"If I was to die like Caius, I would have known it, my inner voice would have told me so, but there was nothing of the sort in me; and I and all my friends understood that things were quite otherwise than with Caius. And now look!" he said to himself. "It can't be. It can't be, but it is. How can it be? How can I understand it?"

And he could not understand and tried to drive this thought away as false, incorrect, morbid, and to dislodge it with other correct, healthy thoughts. But this thought, not only a thought but as if a reality, came back again and stood before him.

And he called up a series of other thoughts in place of this thought, in hopes of finding support in them. He tried to go back to his former ways of thinking, which had screened him formerly from the thought of death. But-strange thing-all that had formerly screened, hidden, wiped out the

consciousness of death now could no longer produce that effect. Lately Ivan Ilyich had spent most of his time in these attempts to restore the former ways of feeling that had screened him from death. He would say to himself: "I'll busy myself with work-why, I used to live by it." And he would go to court, driving away all doubts; he would get into conversation with colleagues and sit down, by old habit absentmindedly, pensively glancing around at the crowd and placing his two emaciated arms on the armrests of the oaken chair, leaning over as usual to a colleague, drawing a brief towards him, exchanging whispers, and then, suddenly raising his eyes and sitting up straight, would pronounce certain words and begin the proceedings. But suddenly in the midst of it the pain in his side, paying no attention to the stage the proceedings had reached, would begin *its own* gnawing work. Ivan Ilyich sensed it, drove the thought of it away, but it would go on, and *it* would come and stand directly in front of him and look at him, and he would be dumbstruck, the light would go out in his eyes, and he would again begin asking himself: "Can *it* alone be true?" And his colleagues and subordinates would be surprised and upset to see that he, such a brilliant and subtle judge, was confused, was making mistakes. He would rouse himself, try to come to his senses, and somehow bring the session to an end and return home with the sad awareness that his work in court could no longer, as before, conceal from him what he wanted concealed; that by his work in court he could not rid himself of *it*. And what was worst of all was that *it* drew him to itself not so that he would do something, but only so that he should look it straight in the eye, look at it and, doing nothing, suffer inexpressibly.

And to save himself from this state, Ivan Ilyich looked for consolation, for other screens, and other screens appeared and for a short time seemed to save him, but at once they were again not so much destroyed as made transparent, as if *it* penetrated everything and there was no screening it out.

It happened in this latter time that he would go into the drawing room he had decorated-into that drawing room where he had fallen, for which-as he laughed venomously to think-for the arranging of which he had sacrificed his life, because he knew that his illness had begun with that bruise-he would go in and see that something had made a scratch on the varnished table. He would look for the cause and find it in the bronze ornamentation of an album, the edge of which was bent. He would pick up the album, an expensive thing he had put together with love, and become vexed at his daughter's and her friends' carelessness-here a torn page, there some photographs turned upside

down. He would diligently put it all in order and bend back the ornamentation.

Then it would occur to him to transfer this whole *établissement** with the albums to another corner, near the flowers. He would call a servant: his daughter or his wife would come to help him; they would disagree, contradict him, he would argue, get angry; but all was well, because he did not remember about *it*, *it* was not seen.

But then his wife would say, as he was moving the objects himself: “Let the servants do it, you’ll do harm to yourself again,” and suddenly *it* would flash from behind the screen, he would see *it*. *It* flashes, he still hopes *it* will disappear, but he involuntarily senses his side-there sits the same thing, gnawing in the same way, and he can no longer forget it, and *it* clearly stares at him from behind the flowers. What is it all for?

“And it’s true that I lost my life here, over this curtain, as if I was storming a fortress. Can it be? How terrible and how stupid! It can’t be! Can’t be, but is.”

He would go to his study, lie down, and again remain alone with *it*. Face to face with *it*, and there was nothing to be done with *it*. Only look at *it* and go cold.

VII

HOW IT CAME about in the third month of Ivan Ilyich's illness it was impossible to say, because it came about step by step, imperceptibly, but what came about was that his wife, and daughter, and son, and the servants, and acquaintances, and the doctors, and, above all, he himself-knew that for others the whole interest in him consisted only in how soon he would finally vacate his place, free the living from the constraint caused by his presence, and be freed himself from his sufferings.

He slept less and less; they gave him opium and began injections of morphine. But that did not relieve him. The dull anguish he experienced in a half-sleeping state only relieved him at first as something new, but then became as much or still more of a torment than outright pain.

Special foods were prepared for him by the doctors' prescription; but these foods became more and more tasteless, more and more disgusting to him.

Special arrangements were also made for his stools, and this was a torment to him each time. A torment in its uncleanness, indecency, and smell, in the awareness that another person had to take part in it.

But in this most unpleasant matter there also appeared a consolation for Ivan Ilyich. The butler's helper, Gerasim, always came to clear away after him.

Gerasim was a clean, fresh young muzhik, grown sleek on town grub. Always cheerful, bright. At first the sight of this man, always clean, dressed Russian style, performing this repulsive chore, embarrassed Ivan Ilyich.

Once, having gotten up from the commode and being unable to pull up his trousers, he collapsed into the soft armchair, looking with horror at his naked, strengthless thighs with their sharply outlined muscles.

Gerasim, in heavy boots, spreading around him the pleasant smell of boot tar and the freshness of winter air, came in with a light, strong step, in a clean canvas apron and a clean cotton shirt, the sleeves rolled up on his bared, strong, young arms, and without looking at Ivan Ilyich-obviously restraining the joy of life shining on his face, so as not to offend the sick man-went to the commode.

"Gerasim," Ivan Ilyich said weakly.

Gerasim gave a start, evidently afraid he was remiss in something, and

with a quick movement he turned to the sick man his fresh, kind, simple young face, only just beginning to sprout a beard.

“What, sir?”

“I suppose this must be unpleasant for you. Excuse me. I can’t help it.”

“Mercy, sir.” And Gerasim flashed his eyes and bared his young, white teeth. “Why shouldn’t I do it? It’s a matter of you being sick.”

And with his deft, strong hands he did his usual business and went out, stepping lightly. And five minutes later, stepping just as lightly, he came back.

Ivan Ilyich was still sitting the same way in the armchair.

“Gerasim,” he said, when the man had set down the clean, washed commode, “help me, please. Come here.” Gerasim went to him. “Lift me up. It’s hard for me alone, and I’ve sent Dmitri away.”

Gerasim went to him. With his strong arms, just as lightly as he stepped, he embraced him, deftly and softly lifted and held him, pulling his trousers up with the other hand, and was about to sit him down. But Ivan Ilyich asked him to lead him to the sofa. Gerasim, effortlessly and as if without pressure, led him, almost carried him, to the sofa and sat him down.

“Thank you. How deftly, how well... you do it all.”

Gerasim smiled again and was about to leave. But Ivan Ilyich felt so good with him that he did not want to let him go.

“I tell you what: move that chair for me, please. No, that one, under my legs. It’s a relief for me when my legs are raised.”

Gerasim brought the chair, set it down noiselessly, lowering it all at once right to the floor, and placed Ivan Ilyich’s legs on it; it seemed to Ivan Ilyich that it was a relief for him when Gerasim lifted his legs high.

“I feel better when my legs are raised,” said Ivan Ilyich. “Put that pillow under for me.”

Gerasim did so. Again he lifted his legs and set them down. Again Ivan Ilyich felt better while Gerasim was holding his legs. When he lowered them, it seemed worse.

“Gerasim,” he said to him, “are you busy now?”

“By no means, sir,” said Gerasim, who had learned from the townspeople how to talk with gentlefolk.

“What more have you got to do?”

“What’s there for me to do? I’ve done everything except split the wood for tomorrow.”

“Then hold my legs a little higher, can you?”

“That I can.” Gerasim lifted his legs higher, and it seemed to Ivan Ilyich that in that position he felt no pain at all.

“But what about the wood?”

“Please don’t worry, sir. There’ll be time.”

Ivan Ilyich told Gerasim to sit and hold his legs, and he conversed with him. And-strange thing-it seemed to him that he felt better while Gerasim held his legs.

After that Ivan Ilyich occasionally summoned Gerasim and made him hold his legs on his shoulders, and he liked talking with him. Gerasim did it easily, willingly, simply, and with a kindness that moved Ivan Ilyich. Health, strength, vigor of life in all other people offended Ivan Ilyich; only Gerasim’s strength and vigor of life did not distress but soothed him.

The main torment for Ivan Ilyich was the lie, that lie for some reason acknowledged by everyone, that he was merely ill and not dying, and that he needed only to keep calm and be treated, and then something very good would come of it. While he knew that whatever they did, nothing would come of it except still more tormenting suffering and death. And he was tormented by that lie, tormented that no one wanted to acknowledge what they all knew and he knew, but wanted to lie to him about his terrible situation, and wanted him and even forced him to participate in that lie. The lie, this lie, perpetrated upon him on the eve of his death, the lie that must needs reduce the dreadful, solemn act of his death to the level of all their visits, curtains, sturgeon dinners... was terribly tormenting for Ivan Ilyich. And-strangely-many times, as they were performing their tricks over him, he was a hair’s breadth from shouting at them: “Stop lying! You know and I know that I’m dying, so at least stop lying.” But he never had the courage to do it. The dreadful, terrible act of his dying, he saw, was reduced by all those around him to the level of an accidental unpleasantness, partly an indecency (something like dealing with a man who comes into a drawing room spreading a bad smell), in the name of that very “decency” he had served all his life; he saw that no one would feel sorry for him, because no one even wanted to understand his situation. Only Gerasim understood that situation and pitied him. And therefore Ivan Ilyich felt good only with Gerasim. It felt good to him when Gerasim held his legs up, sometimes all night long, and refused to go to sleep, saying: “Please don’t worry, Ivan Ilyich, I’ll still get some sleep;” or when, suddenly addressing him familiarly, he added: “Maybe

if you weren't sick, but why not be a help?" Gerasim alone did not lie, everything showed that he alone understood what it was all about, and did not find it necessary to conceal it, and simply pitied his emaciated, weakened master. Once he even said straight out, as Ivan Ilyich was sending him away: "We'll all die. Why not take the trouble?"-expressing by that that he was not burdened by his trouble precisely because he was bearing it for a dying man and hoped that when his time came someone would go to the same trouble for him.

Apart from this lie, or owing to it, the most tormenting thing for Ivan Ilyich was that no one pitied him as he wanted to be pitied: there were moments, after prolonged suffering, when Ivan Ilyich wanted most of all, however embarrassed he would have been to admit it, to be pitied by someone like a sick child. He wanted to be caressed, kissed, wept over, as children are caressed and comforted. He knew that he was an important judge, that he had a graying beard, and that therefore it was impossible; but he wanted it all the same. And in his relations with Gerasim there was something close to it, and therefore his relations with Gerasim comforted him. Ivan Ilyich wanted to weep, wanted to be caressed and wept over, and then comes his colleague, the judge Shebek, and instead of weeping and caressing, Ivan Ilyich makes a serious, stern, profoundly thoughtful face and, by inertia, gives his opinion on the significance of a decision of the appeals court and stubbornly insists on it. This lie around and within him poisoned most of all the last days of Ivan Ilyich's life.

VIII

IT WAS MORNING. It was morning if only because Gerasim had gone and the servant Pyotr had come, put out the candles, drawn one curtain, and quietly begun tidying up. Whether it was morning or evening, Friday or Sunday, was all the same, all one and the same: a gnawing, tormenting pain, never subsiding for a moment; the awareness of life ever hopelessly going but never quite gone; always the same dreadful, hateful death approaching—the sole reality now—and always the same lie. What were days, weeks, and hours here?

“Would you care for tea, sir?”

“He needs order, so his masters should have tea in the mornings,” he thought, and said only:

“No.”

“Would you like to lie on the sofa?”

“He needs to tidy up the room, and I’m in his way, I am uncleanness, disorder,” he thought, and said only:

“No, let me be.”

The servant pottered around some more. Ivan Ilyich reached out his hand. Pyotr obligingly came over.

“What can I do for you, sir?”

“My watch.”

Pyotr picked up the watch, which was lying just by his hand, and gave it to him.

“Half past eight. Are they up yet?”

“No, sir. Vassily Ivanovich” (that was the son) “has gone to school, and Praskovya Fyodorovna gave orders to wake her if you asked for her. Shall I do so?”

“No, don’t.” “Shouldn’t I try some tea?” he thought. “Yes... bring tea.”

Pyotr went to the door. Ivan Ilyich was afraid to be left alone. “How can I keep him? Ah, yes, my medicine.” “Pyotr, give me my medicine.” “Who knows, maybe the medicine will still help.” He took a spoonful and swallowed it. “No, it won’t help. It’s all nonsense, deception,” he decided as soon as he tasted the familiar sickly sweet and hopeless taste. “No, I can’t believe it any more. But the pain, why the pain? If only it would stop for a moment.” And he moaned. Pyotr turned back. “No, go. Bring the tea.”

Pyotr went out. Ivan Ilyich, left alone, moaned not so much from pain, terrible though it was, as from anguish. "Always the same, always the same, all these endless days and nights. Let it be sooner. What sooner? Death, darkness. No, no. Anything's better than death!"

When Pyotr came in with the tea tray, Ivan Ilyich looked at him for a long time in perplexity, not understanding who and what he was. Pyotr became embarrassed under this gaze. And when Pyotr became embarrassed, Ivan Ilyich came to his senses.

"Ah, yes," he said, "the tea... good, set it down. Only help me to wash and put on a clean shirt."

And Ivan Ilyich began to wash. With pauses for rest, he washed his hands, his face, brushed his teeth, started combing his hair, and looked in the mirror. He became frightened; especially frightening was how his hair lay flat on his pale forehead.

While his shirt was being changed, he knew he would be still more frightened if he looked at his body, so he did not look at himself. But now it was all over. He put on his dressing gown, wrapped himself in a plaid, and sat down in the armchair to have tea. For a moment he felt refreshed, but as soon as he began to drink the tea, there was again the same taste, the same pain. He forced himself to finish it and lay down, stretching his legs. He lay down and dismissed Pyotr.

Always the same thing. A drop of hope glimmers, then a sea of despair begins to rage, and always the pain, always the pain, always the anguish, always one and the same thing. Being alone is a horrible anguish, he wants to call someone, but he knows beforehand that with others it is still worse. "At least morphine again-to become oblivious. I'll tell him, the doctor, to think up something else. It's impossible like this, impossible."

An hour, two hours pass in this way. But now there's a ringing in the front hall. Could be the doctor. Right, it's the doctor, fresh, brisk, fat, cheerful, with an expression that says: So you're scared of something here, but we'll fix it all up for you in no time. The doctor knows that this expression is unsuitable here, but he has put it on once and for all and cannot take it off, like a man who puts on a tailcoat in the morning and goes around visiting.

The doctor rubs his hands briskly, comfortingly.

"I'm cold. It's freezing outside. Let me warm up," he says with such an expression as if they only had to wait a little till he warmed up, and when he

warmed up, he would put everything right.

“Well, how...?”

Ivan Ilyich senses that the doctor would like to say “How’s every little thing?” but that he, too, senses that he cannot say that, and so he says: “How was your night?”

Ivan Ilyich looks at the doctor with a questioning expression: “Will you never be ashamed of lying?” But the doctor does not want to understand the question.

And Ivan Ilyich says:

“Terrible as ever. The pain doesn’t go away, doesn’t let up. If you could do something!”

“Ah, you sick people are always like that. Well, sir, now I seem to be warm; even the most exacting Praskovya Fyodorovna could make no objection to my temperature. Well, sir, greetings.” And the doctor shakes his hand.

And, setting aside all his earlier playfulness, the doctor begins with a serious air to examine the sick man, takes his pulse, his temperature, and then gets to theappings, the auscultations.

Ivan Ilyich knows firmly and indubitably that this is all nonsense and empty deception, but when the doctor, getting on his knees, stretches out, putting his ear now higher, now lower, and with a most significant face performs various gymnastic evolutions over him, Ivan Ilyich succumbs to it, as he used to succumb to lawyers’ speeches, when he knew very well they were all lies and why they were lies.

The doctor, kneeling on the sofa, was still doing his tapping when the silk dress of Praskovya Fyodorovna rustled in the doorway and she was heard reproaching Pyotr for not announcing the doctor’s arrival to her.

She comes in, kisses her husband, and at once begins to insist that she was up long ago and it was only by misunderstanding that she was not there when the doctor came.

Ivan Ilyich looks at her, examines her all over, and reproaches her for her whiteness, and plumpness, and the cleanness of her hands, her neck, the glossiness of her hair, and the sparkle of her eyes, so full of life. He hates her with all the forces of his soul. And her touch makes him suffer from a flood of hatred for her.

Her attitude towards him and his illness is ever the same. As the doctor had developed in himself an attitude towards his patients which he was

unable to take off, so she had developed a certain attitude towards him-that he had not done something he should have, and he himself was to blame, and she lovingly reproached him for it-and she could no longer take off this attitude towards him.

“He simply doesn’t listen! Doesn’t take his medicine on time. And above all, he lies in a position which is surely bad for him-legs up.”

She told about how he made Gerasim hold his legs.

The doctor smiled with kindly disdain, meaning: “No help for it, these sick people sometimes think up such foolishness; but it’s forgivable.”

When the examination was over, the doctor looked at his watch, and then Praskovya Fyodorovna announced to Ivan Ilyich that, whether he liked it or not, she had invited a famous doctor that day, and he would examine him and consult with Mikhail Danilovich (as the usual doctor was called).

“Don’t resist, please. I’m doing it for myself,” she said ironically, letting it be felt that she was doing it all for him, and that alone gave him no right to refuse. He said nothing and scowled. He felt that this lie surrounding him was so entangled that it was hard to sort anything out.

Everything she did for him she did only for herself, and she said to him that she was doing for herself that which she was in fact doing for herself, as if it was such an incredible thing that he would have to understand it inversely.

Indeed, at half past eleven the famous doctor arrived. Again there were auscultations and significant conversations in his presence and in the next room about the kidney, about the appendix, and questions and answers with such a significant air that again, instead of the real question of life and death, which now alone confronted him, there re-emerged the question of the kidney and the appendix, which were not behaving as they should, and for which Mikhail Danilovich and the famous doctor were about to fall upon them and make them mend their ways.

The famous doctor took his leave with a serious but not hopeless air. And to the timid question which Ivan Ilyich addressed to him, raising his eyes glittering with fear and hope, whether there was a possibility of recovery, he replied that, though he could not vouch for it, there was such a possibility. The hopeful look with which Ivan Ilyich saw the doctor off was so pitiful that, on seeing it, Praskovya Fyodorovna even burst into tears as she came out of the study to hand the famous doctor his honorarium.

The boost in his spirits produced by the doctor’s reassurance did not last

long. Again the same room, the same paintings, curtains, wallpaper, vials, and his same sick, suffering body. And Ivan Ilyich began to moan; he was given an injection and became oblivious.

When he came to, it was getting dark; his dinner was brought. He forced himself to swallow some bouillon; and again the same thing, and again the approach of night.

After dinner, at seven o'clock, Praskovya Fyodorovna came into his room dressed for the evening, with fat, tight-laced breasts, and with traces of powder on her face. She had already reminded him in the morning that they were going to the theater. Sarah Bernhardt¹⁰ was visiting, and they had a box he had insisted on taking. Now he had forgotten about it, and her outfit offended him. But he concealed his offense when he remembered that he himself had insisted that they get a box and go, because it was an educational aesthetic pleasure for the children.

Praskovya Fyodorovna came in pleased with herself, but as if guilty. She sat down, asked about his health, as he could see, only in order to ask, not in order to find out, knowing that there was nothing to find out, and began telling him what she had in mind: that they would not have gone for anything, but the box had been taken, that Hélène and their daughter and Petrishchev (the examining magistrate, the daughter's fiancé) were going, and that it was impossible to let them go alone. And that otherwise she would have liked better to sit with him. Only he should do what the doctor had prescribed in her absence.

"Ah, yes, and Fyodor Petrovich" (the fiancé) "wanted to come in. Can he? And Liza."

"Let them."

The daughter came in all dressed up, with her young body bared, that body which made him suffer so. Yet she exposed it. Strong, healthy, obviously in love, and indignant at the illness, suffering, and death that interfered with her happiness.

Fyodor Petrovich came in, too, in a tailcoat, his hair curled *à la Capoule*,¹¹ with a long, sinewy neck closely encased in a white collar, with an enormous white shirt front and narrow black trousers tightly stretched over his strong thighs, with a white glove drawn onto one hand, and holding an opera hat.

After him a little schoolboy crept in inconspicuously, in a new uniform, the poor lad, wearing gloves, and with terrible blue circles under his eyes, the

meaning of which Ivan Ilyich knew.

He had always pitied his son. And his frightened and commiserating glance was dreadful for him. Apart from Gerasim, it seemed to Ivan Ilyich that Vasya alone understood and pitied him.

They all sat down and asked again about his health. Silence ensued. Liza asked her mother about the opera glasses. An altercation ensued between mother and daughter about who had done what with them. It was unpleasant.

Fyodor Petrovich asked Ivan Ilyich whether he had seen Sarah Bernhardt. At first Ivan Ilyich did not understand what he was being asked, and then he said:

“No, have you?”

“Yes, in *Adrienne Lecouvreur*.”¹²

Praskovya Fyodorovna said she had been especially good in something or other. The daughter objected. A conversation began about the gracefulness and realism of her acting-that very conversation which is always one and the same.

In the middle of the conversation, Fyodor Petrovich glanced at Ivan Ilyich and fell silent. The others glanced at him and fell silent. Ivan Ilyich was staring straight ahead with glittering eyes, obviously indignant with them. This had to be rectified, but it was quite impossible to rectify it. This silence had to be broken somehow. No one ventured to do it, and they all became frightened that the decorous lie would somehow be violated, and what was there would be clear to all. Liza was the first to venture. She broke the silence. She wanted to conceal what they all felt, but she let it slip.

“Anyhow, *if we’re going*, it’s time,” she said, glancing at her watch, a gift from her father, and smiling barely perceptibly to the young man about something known only to them, and she stood up, her dress rustling.

They all stood up, said good-bye, and left.

When they were gone, it seemed a relief to Ivan Ilyich: there was no lie-it had gone with them-but the pain remained. The same pain, the same fear made it so that nothing was harder, nothing was easier. It was all worse.

Again minute followed minute, hour hour, always the same, and always without end, and always more frightening the inevitable end.

“Yes, send Gerasim,” he replied to Pyotr’s question.

IX

LATE THAT NIGHT his wife returned. She came in on tiptoe, but he heard her: he opened his eyes and hastily closed them. She wanted to send Gerasim away and sit with him herself. He opened his eyes and said:

“No. Go away.”

“Are you suffering very much?”

“It makes no difference.”

“Take some opium.”

He agreed and drank it. She left.

Until about three he lay in tormenting oblivion. It seemed to him that they were pushing him painfully into some narrow and deep black sack, and kept pushing him further, and could not push him through. And this thing, which is terrible for him, is being accomplished with suffering. And he is afraid, and yet he wants to fall through, and he struggles, and he helps. And then suddenly he lost hold and fell, and came to his senses. The same Gerasim is sitting at the foot of the bed, dozing calmly, patiently. And he is lying with his emaciated legs in stockings placed on Gerasim's shoulders; the same candle with its shade, and the same unceasing pain.

“Go away, Gerasim,” he whispered.

“Never mind, I'll stay, sir.”

“No, go away.”

He took his legs down, lay sideways on his arm, and felt sorry for himself. He waited only until Gerasim went to the next room, and then stopped holding himself back and wept like a child. He wept over his helplessness, over his terrible loneliness, over the cruelty of people, over the cruelty of God, over the absence of God.

“Why have You done all this? Why have You brought me here? Why, why do You torment me so terribly?...”

He did not expect an answer and wept that there was not and could not be an answer. The pain rose up again, but he did not stir, did not call out. He kept saying to himself: “Well, go on, beat me! But what for? What have I done to You? What for?”

Then he quieted down, not only stopped weeping, but stopped breathing, and became all attention: it was as if he were listening not to a voice that spoke in sounds, but to the voice of his soul, to the course of thoughts arising

in him.

“What do you want?” was the first clear idea, expressible in words, that he heard. “What do you want? What do you want?” he repeated to himself. “What? Not to suffer. To live,” he replied.

And again he gave himself entirely to such intense attention that even the pain did not distract him.

“To live? To live how?” asked the voice of his soul.

“Yes, to live as I lived before: nicely, pleasantly.”

“As you lived before, nicely and pleasantly?” asked the voice. And he started to go over in his imagination the best moments of his pleasant life. But-strange thing-all those best moments of his pleasant life seemed now not at all as they had seemed then. All-except for his first memories of childhood. There, in childhood, there had been something really pleasant, which one could live with if it came back. But the man who had experienced that pleasure was no more: it was as if the memory was about someone else.

As soon as that began the result of which was he, the Ivan Ilyich of today, all that had then seemed like joys melted away and turned into something worthless and often vile.

And the further from childhood, the closer to the present, the more worthless and dubious were those joys. It began with law school. There had still been some truly good things there: there had been merriment, there had been friendship, there had been hopes. But in the higher grades those good moments had already become more rare. Then, during the initial time of working for the governor, there had again been good moments: these were his memories of love for a woman. Then it all became confused, and there was still less that was good. And further on still less of the good, and the further, the less.

His marriage... so accidental, and the disenchantment, and the smell of his wife's breath, and the sensuality, the dissembling! And this deadly service, and these worries about money, and that for a year, and two, and ten, and twenty-and all of it the same. And the further, the deadlier. As if I was going steadily downhill, while imagining I was going up. And so it was. In public opinion I was going uphill, and exactly to that extent life was slipping away from under me... And now that's it, so die!

But what is this? Why? It can't be. Can it be that life is so meaningless and vile? And if it is indeed so vile and meaningless, then why die, and die suffering? Something's not right.

“Maybe I did not live as I should have?” would suddenly come into his head. “But how not, if I did everything one ought to?” he would say to himself and at once drive this sole solution to the whole riddle of life and death away from him as something completely impossible.

“What do you want now, then? To live? To live how? To live as you live in court, when the usher proclaims: ‘Court is in session!’ Court is in session, court is in session,” he repeated to himself. “Here is that court! But I’m not guilty!” he cried out angrily. “What for?” And he stopped weeping and, turning his face to the wall, began to think about one and the same thing: why, what for, all this horror?

But however much he thought, he found no answer. And when it occurred to him, as it often did, that it was all happening because he had not lived right, he at once recalled all the correctness of his life and drove this strange thought away.

X

ANOTHER TWO WEEKS went by. Ivan Ilyich no longer got up from the sofa. He did not want to lie in bed and so he lay on the sofa. And, lying almost always face to the wall, he suffered all alone the same insoluble suffering and thought all alone the same insoluble thought. What is this? Can it be true that it is death? And an inner voice replied: Yes, it's true. Why these torments? And the voice replied: Just so, for no reason. Beyond and besides that there was nothing.

From the very beginning of his illness, from the time when Ivan Ilyich first went to the doctor, his life had divided into two opposite states of mind, which alternated with each other: now there was despair and the expectation of an incomprehensible and terrible death, now there was hope and the interest-filled process of observing the functioning of his body. Now there hung before his eyes a kidney or an intestine that shirked its duty for a time; now there was only incomprehensible, terrible death, from which there was no escape.

These two states of mind had alternated from the very beginning of the illness; but the further the illness went, the more dubious and fantastic became the considerations of the kidney and the more real the awareness of approaching death.

He needed only to recall what he had been three months ago and what he was now, to recall how steadily he had gone downhill, for any possibility of hope to be destroyed.

In the recent time of that solitude in which he found himself, lying face to the back of the sofa, that solitude in the midst of the populous town and his numerous acquaintances and family—a solitude than which there could be none more total anywhere: not at the bottom of the sea, not under the earth—in the recent time of that dreadful solitude, Ivan Ilyich had lived only on imaginings of the past. One after another, pictures of the past appeared to him. They always began with the nearest time and went back to the most remote, to childhood, and there they stayed. If Ivan Ilyich recalled the stewed prunes he had been given to eat that day, he then recalled the raw, shriveled French prunes of his childhood, their special taste, the abundant saliva when it got as far as the stone, and alongside this memory of taste emerged a whole series of memories from that time: his nanny, his brother, his toys. “Mustn’t

think about that... too painful," Ivan Ilyich said to himself and shifted back to the present. A button on the back of the sofa and the puckered morocco. "Morocco's expensive, flimsy; there was a quarrel over it. But there was another morocco and another quarrel, when we tore our father's briefcase and were punished, and mama brought us little pies." And again it stayed with childhood, and again it was painful for Ivan Ilyich, and he tried to drive it away and think of something else.

And again right there, along with this course of recollection, another course of recollection was going on in his soul-of how his illness had grown and worsened. The further back it went, the more life there was. There was more goodness in life, and more of life itself. The two merged together. "As my torment kept getting worse and worse, so the whole of life got worse and worse," he thought. There was one bright spot back there, at the beginning of life, and then it became ever darker and darker, ever quicker and quicker. "In inverse proportion to the square of the distance from death," thought Ivan Ilyich. And this image of a stone plunging down with increasing speed sank into his soul. Life, a series of ever-increasing sufferings, races faster and faster towards its end, the most dreadful suffering. "I'm racing..." He would give a start, rouse himself, want to resist; but he already knew that it was impossible to resist, and again, with eyes weary from looking, but unable not to look at what was before him, he gazed at the back of the sofa and waited-waited for that dreadful fall, impact, and destruction. "It's impossible to resist," he said to himself. "But at least to understand what for? Even that is impossible. It would be possible to explain it, if I were to say to myself that I have not lived as one ought. But that cannot possibly be acknowledged," he said to himself, recalling all the legitimacy, regularity, and decency of his life. "To admit that is quite impossible," he said to himself, his lips smiling, as if there were someone to see that smile and be deceived by it. "There's no explanation! Torment, death... What for?"

XI

SO TWO WEEKS WENT BY. During those weeks an event desired by Ivan Ilyich and his wife took place: Petrishchev made a formal proposal. This took place in the evening. The next day Praskovya Fyodorovna came to her husband's room, pondering how to announce Fyodor Petrovich's proposal to him, but the previous night a new change for the worse had occurred in Ivan Ilyich. Praskovya Fyodorovna found him on the same sofa, but in a new position. He was lying on his back, moaning, and staring straight in front of him with a fixed gaze.

She started talking about medicines. He shifted his gaze to her. She did not finish what she had begun: such spite, precisely against her, was expressed in that gaze.

"For Christ's sake, let me die in peace," he said.

She was going to leave, but just then their daughter came in and went over to greet him. He looked at his daughter in the same way as at his wife, and to her questions about his health said drily to her that he would soon free them all of himself. They both fell silent, sat for a while, and left.

"What fault is it of ours?" Liza said to her mother. "As if we did anything! I feel sorry for papa, but why torment us?"

The doctor came at the usual time. Ivan Ilyich answered "Yes" and "No," without taking his spiteful gaze from him, and in the end said:

"You know you can't help at all, so leave off."

"We can ease your suffering," said the doctor.

"Even that you can't do. Leave off."

The doctor came out to the drawing room and informed Praskovya Fyodorovna that things were very bad and that the only remedy was opium to ease his sufferings, which must be terrible.

The doctor said that his physical sufferings were terrible, and that was true; but more terrible than his physical sufferings were his moral sufferings, and these were his chief torment.

His moral sufferings consisted in the fact that, looking at Gerasim's sleepy, good-natured, high-cheekboned face that night, it had suddenly occurred to him: And what if my whole life, my conscious life, has indeed been "not right"?

It occurred to him that what had formerly appeared completely impossible

to him, that he had not lived his life as he should have, might be true. It occurred to him that those barely noticeable impulses he had felt to fight against what highly placed people considered good, barely noticeable impulses which he had immediately driven away—that they might have been the real thing, and all the rest might have been not right. His work, and his living conditions, and his family, and these social and professional interests—all might have been not right. He tried to defend it all to himself. And he suddenly felt all the weakness of what he was defending. And there was nothing to defend.

“But if that’s so,” he said to himself, “and I am quitting this life with the consciousness that I have ruined everything that was given me, and it is impossible to rectify it, what then?” He lay on his back and started going over his whole life in a totally new way. In the morning, when he saw the footman, then his wife, then his daughter, then the doctor—their every movement, their every word confirmed the terrible truth revealed to him that night. In them he saw himself, all that he had lived by, and saw clearly that it was all not right, that it was all a terrible, vast deception concealing both life and death. This consciousness increased his physical sufferings tenfold. He moaned, and thrashed, and tore at his clothes. It seemed to be choking and crushing him. And for that he hated them.

He was given a large dose of opium and became oblivious; but at dinnertime the same thing began again. He drove everyone away and thrashed from side to side.

His wife came to him and said:

“Jean, darling, do this for me” (for me?). “It can’t do any harm and often helps. It’s really nothing. Even healthy people often...”

He opened his eyes wide.

“What? Take communion? Why? There’s no need! Although...”

She began to cry.

“Yes, my dear? I’ll send for ours, he’s so nice.”

“Excellent, very good,” he said.

When the priest came and confessed him, he softened, felt a sort of relief from his doubts and consequently from his sufferings, and a moment of hope came over him. He began thinking about the appendix again and the possibility of its mending. He took communion with tears in his eyes.

When they laid him down after communion, he felt eased for a moment, and hopes of life appeared again. He began to think about the operation that

had been suggested to him. "To live, I want to live," he said to himself. His wife came to congratulate him on his communion; she said the usual words and added:

"Isn't it true you're feeling better?"

He said "Yes" without looking at her.

Her clothes, her figure, the expression of her face, the sound of her voice—all told him one thing: "Not right. All that you've lived and live by is a lie, a deception, concealing life and death from you." And as soon as he thought it, his hatred arose and together with hatred his tormenting physical sufferings and with his sufferings the consciousness of near, inevitable destruction. Something new set in: twisting, and shooting, and choking his breath.

The expression of his face when he said "Yes" was terrible. Having uttered this "Yes," he looked her straight in the face, turned over with a quickness unusual in his weak state, and shouted:

"Go away, go away, leave me alone!"

XII

FROM THAT MOMENT began a three-day ceaseless howling, which was so terrible that it was impossible to hear it without horror even through two closed doors. The moment he answered his wife, he realized that he was lost, that there was no return, that the end had come, the final end, and his doubt was still not resolved, it still remained doubt.

“Oh! Ohh! Oh!” he howled in various intonations. He began by howling, “I won’t!” and so went on howling on the letter O.

For all three days, in the course of which there was no time for him, he was thrashing about in that black sack into which an invisible, invincible force was pushing him. He struggled as one condemned to death struggles in the executioner’s hands, knowing he cannot save himself; and with every moment he felt that, despite all his efforts to struggle, he was coming closer and closer to what terrified him. He felt that his torment lay in being thrust into that black hole, and still more in being unable to get into it. What kept him from getting into it was the claim that his had been a good life. This justification of his life clutched at him, would not let him move forward, and tormented him most of all.

Suddenly some force shoved him in the chest, in the side, choked his breath still more, he fell through the hole, and there, at the end of the hole, something lit up. What was done to him was like what happens on the train, when you think you are moving forward, but are moving backward, and suddenly find out the real direction.

“Yes, it was all not right,” he said to himself, “but never mind. I can, I can do ‘right.’ But what is ‘right’?” he asked himself and suddenly grew still.

This was at the end of the third day, an hour before his death. Just then the little schoolboy quietly stole into his father’s room and went up to his bed. The dying man went on howling desperately and thrashing his arms about. His hand landed on the boy’s head. The boy seized it, pressed it to his lips, and wept.

Just then Ivan Ilyich fell through, saw light, and it was revealed to him that his life had not been what it ought, but that it could still be rectified. He asked himself what was “right,” and grew still, listening. Here he felt that someone was kissing his hand. He opened his eyes and looked at his son. He felt sorry for him. His wife came over to him. He looked at her. She was

gazing at him with a despairing expression, openmouthed, and with unwiped tears on her nose and cheek. He felt sorry for her.

“Yes, I’m tormenting them,” he thought. “They’re sorry, but it will be better for them when I die.” He wanted to say that, but was unable to bring it out. “Anyhow, why speak, I must act,” he thought. He indicated his son to his wife with his eyes and said:

“Take him away... sorry... for you, too...” He also wanted to say “Forgive,” but said “Forgo,” and, no longer able to correct himself, waved his hand, knowing that the one who had to would understand.

And suddenly it became clear to him that what was tormenting him and would not be resolved was suddenly all resolved at once, on two sides, on ten sides, on all sides. He was sorry for them, he had to act so that it was not painful for them. To deliver them and deliver himself from these sufferings. “How good and how simple,” he thought. “And the pain?” he asked himself. “What’s become of it? Where are you, pain?”

He became attentive.

“Yes, there it is. Well, then, let there be pain.

“And death? Where is it?”

He sought his old habitual fear of death and could not find it. Where was it? What death? There was no more fear because there was no more death.

Instead of death there was light.

“So that’s it!” he suddenly said aloud. “What joy!”

For him all this happened in an instant and the significance of that instant never changed. For those present, his agony went on for two more hours. Something gurgled in his chest; his emaciated body kept twitching. Then the gurgling and wheezing gradually subsided.

“It’s finished!” someone said over him.

He heard those words and repeated them in his soul. “Death is finished,” he said to himself. “It is no more.”

He drew in air, stopped at mid-breath, stretched out, and died.

GOD SEES THE TRUTH, BUT WAITS

In the town of Vladimir lived a young merchant named Ivan Dmitrich Aksionov. He had two shops and a house of his own.

Aksionov was a handsome, fair-haired, curly-headed fellow, full of fun, and very fond of singing. When quite a young man he had been given to drink, and was riotous when he had had too much; but after he married he gave up drinking, except now and then.

One summer Aksionov was going to the Nizhny Fair, and as he bade good-bye to his family, his wife said to him, "Ivan Dmitrich, do not start to-day; I have had a bad dream about you."

Aksionov laughed, and said, "You are afraid that when I get to the fair I shall go on a spree."

His wife replied: "I do not know what I am afraid of; all I know is that I had a bad dream. I dreamt you returned from the town, and when you took off your cap I saw that your hair was quite grey."

Aksionov laughed. "That's a lucky sign," said he. "See if I don't sell out all my goods, and bring you some presents from the fair."

So he said good-bye to his family, and drove away.

When he had travelled half-way, he met a merchant whom he knew, and they put up at the same inn for the night. They had some tea together, and then went to bed in adjoining rooms.

It was not Aksionov's habit to sleep late, and, wishing to travel while it was still cool, he aroused his driver before dawn, and told him to put in the horses.

Then he made his way across to the landlord of the inn (who lived in a cottage at the back), paid his bill, and continued his journey.

When he had gone about twenty-five miles, he stopped for the horses to be fed. Aksionov rested awhile in the passage of the inn, then he stepped out into the porch, and, ordering a samovar to be heated, got out his guitar and began to play.

Suddenly a troika drove up with tinkling bells and an official alighted, followed by two soldiers. He came to Aksionov and began to question him, asking him who he was and whence he came. Aksionov answered him fully, and said, "Won't you have some tea with me?" But the official went on cross-questioning him and asking him. "Where did you spend last night?"

Were you alone, or with a fellow-merchant? Did you see the other merchant this morning? Why did you leave the inn before dawn?"

Aksionov wondered why he was asked all these questions, but he described all that had happened, and then added, "Why do you cross-question me as if I were a thief or a robber? I am travelling on business of my own, and there is no need to question me."

Then the official, calling the soldiers, said, "I am the police-officer of this district, and I question you because the merchant with whom you spent last night has been found with his throat cut. We must search your things."

They entered the house. The soldiers and the police-officer unstrapped Aksionov's luggage and searched it. Suddenly the officer drew a knife out of a bag, crying, "Whose knife is this?"

Aksionov looked, and seeing a blood-stained knife taken from his bag, he was frightened.

"How is it there is blood on this knife?"

Aksionov tried to answer, but could hardly utter a word, and only stammered: "I-don't know-not mine." Then the police-officer said: "This morning the merchant was found in bed with his throat cut. You are the only person who could have done it. The house was locked from inside, and no one else was there. Here is this blood-stained knife in your bag and your face and manner betray you! Tell me how you killed him, and how much money you stole?"

Aksionov swore he had not done it; that he had not seen the merchant after they had had tea together; that he had no money except eight thousand rubles of his own, and that the knife was not his. But his voice was broken, his face pale, and he trembled with fear as though he went guilty.

The police-officer ordered the soldiers to bind Aksionov and to put him in the cart. As they tied his feet together and flung him into the cart, Aksionov crossed himself and wept. His money and goods were taken from him, and he was sent to the nearest town and imprisoned there. Enquiries as to his character were made in Vladimir. The merchants and other inhabitants of that town said that in former days he used to drink and waste his time, but that he was a good man. Then the trial came on: he was charged with murdering a merchant from Ryazan, and robbing him of twenty thousand rubles.

His wife was in despair, and did not know what to believe. Her children were all quite small; one was a baby at her breast. Taking them all with her, she went to the town where her husband was in jail. At first she was not

allowed to see him; but after much begging, she obtained permission from the officials, and was taken to him. When she saw her husband in prison-dress and in chains, shut up with thieves and criminals, she fell down, and did not come to her senses for a long time. Then she drew her children to her, and sat down near him. She told him of things at home, and asked about what had happened to him. He told her all, and she asked, "What can we do now?"

"We must petition the Czar not to let an innocent man perish."

His wife told him that she had sent a petition to the Czar, but it had not been accepted.

Aksionov did not reply, but only looked downcast.

Then his wife said, "It was not for nothing I dreamt your hair had turned grey. You remember? You should not have started that day." And passing her fingers through his hair, she said: "Vanya dearest, tell your wife the truth; was it not you who did it?"

"So you, too, suspect me!" said Aksionov, and, hiding his face in his hands, he began to weep. Then a soldier came to say that the wife and children must go away; and Aksionov said good-bye to his family for the last time.

When they were gone, Aksionov recalled what had been said, and when he remembered that his wife also had suspected him, he said to himself, "It seems that only God can know the truth; it is to Him alone we must appeal, and from Him alone expect mercy."

And Aksionov wrote no more petitions; gave up all hope, and only prayed to God.

Aksionov was condemned to be flogged and sent to the mines. So he was flogged with a knot, and when the wounds made by the knot were healed, he was driven to Siberia with other convicts.

For twenty-six years Aksionov lived as a convict in Siberia. His hair turned white as snow, and his beard grew long, thin, and grey. All his mirth went; he stooped; he walked slowly, spoke little, and never laughed, but he often prayed.

In prison Aksionov learnt to make boots, and earned a little money, with which he bought *The Lives of the Saints*. He read this book when there was light enough in the prison; and on Sundays in the prison-church he read the lessons and sang in the choir; for his voice was still good.

The prison authorities liked Aksionov for his meekness, and his fellow-prisoners respected him: they called him "Grandfather," and "The Saint."

When they wanted to petition the prison authorities about anything, they always made Aksionov their spokesman, and when there were quarrels among the prisoners they came to him to put things right, and to judge the matter.

No news reached Aksionov from his home, and he did not even know if his wife and children were still alive.

One day a fresh gang of convicts came to the prison. In the evening the old prisoners collected round the new ones and asked them what towns or villages they came from, and what they were sentenced for. Among the rest Aksionov sat down near the newcomers, and listened with downcast air to what was said.

One of the new convicts, a tall, strong man of sixty, with a closely-cropped grey beard, was telling the others what he had been arrested for.

"Well, friends," he said, "I only took a horse that was tied to a sledge, and I was arrested and accused of stealing. I said I had only taken it to get home quicker, and had then let it go; besides, the driver was a personal friend of mine. So I said, 'It's all right.' 'No,' said they, 'you stole it.' But how or where I stole it they could not say. I once really did something wrong, and ought by rights to have come here long ago, but that time I was not found out. Now I have been sent here for nothing at all... Eh, but it's lies I'm telling you; I've been to Siberia before, but I did not stay long."

"Where are you from?" asked some one.

"From Vladimir. My family are of that town. My name is Makar, and they also call me Semyonich."

Aksionov raised his head and said: "Tell me, Semyonich, do you know anything of the merchants Aksionov of Vladimir? Are they still alive?"

"Know them? Of course I do. The Aksionovs are rich, though their father is in Siberia: a sinner like ourselves, it seems! As for you, Gran'dad, how did you come here?"

Aksionov did not like to speak of his misfortune. He only sighed, and said, "For my sins I have been in prison these twenty-six years."

"What sins?" asked Makar Semyonich.

But Aksionov only said, "Well, well-I must have deserved it!" He would have said no more, but his companions told the newcomers how Aksionov came to be in Siberia; how some one had killed a merchant, and had put the knife among Aksionov's things, and Aksionov had been unjustly condemned.

When Makar Semyonich heard this, he looked at Aksionov, slapped his

own knee, and exclaimed, "Well, this is wonderful! Really wonderful! But how old you've grown, Gran'dad!"

The others asked him why he was so surprised, and where he had seen Aksionov before; but Makar Semyonich did not reply. He only said: "It's wonderful that we should meet here, lads!"

These words made Aksionov wonder whether this man knew who had killed the merchant; so he said, "Perhaps, Semyonich, you have heard of that affair, or maybe you've seen me before?"

"How could I help hearing? The world's full of rumours. But it's a long time ago, and I've forgotten what I heard."

"Perhaps you heard who killed the merchant?" asked Aksionov.

Makar Semyonich laughed, and replied: "It must have been him in whose bag the knife was found! If some one else hid the knife there, 'He's not a thief till he's caught,' as the saying is. How could any one put a knife into your bag while it was under your head? It would surely have woke you up."

When Aksionov heard these words, he felt sure this was the man who had killed the merchant. He rose and went away. All that night Aksionov lay awake. He felt terribly unhappy, and all sorts of images rose in his mind. There was the image of his wife as she was when he parted from her to go to the fair. He saw her as if she were present; her face and her eyes rose before him; he heard her speak and laugh. Then he saw his children, quite little, as they were at that time: one with a little cloak on, another at his mother's breast. And then he remembered himself as he used to be-young and merry. He remembered how he sat playing the guitar in the porch of the inn where he was arrested, and how free from care he had been. He saw, in his mind, the place where he was flogged, the executioner, and the people standing around; the chains, the convicts, all the twenty-six years of his prison life, and his premature old age. The thought of it all made him so wretched that he was ready to kill himself.

"And it's all that villain's doing!" thought Aksionov. And his anger was so great against Makar Semyonich that he longed for vengeance, even if he himself should perish for it. He kept repeating prayers all night, but could get no peace. During the day he did not go near Makar Semyonich, nor even look at him.

A fortnight passed in this way. Aksionov could not sleep at night, and was so miserable that he did not know what to do.

One night as he was walking about the prison he noticed some earth that

came rolling out from under one of the shelves on which the prisoners slept. He stopped to see what it was. Suddenly Makar Semyonich crept out from under the shelf, and looked up at Aksionov with frightened face. Aksionov tried to pass without looking at him, but Makar seized his hand and told him that he had dug a hole under the wall, getting rid of the earth by putting it into his high-boots, and emptying it out every day on the road when the prisoners were driven to their work.

“Just you keep quiet, old man, and you shall get out too. If you blab, they’ll flog the life out of me, but I will kill you first.”

Aksionov trembled with anger as he looked at his enemy. He drew his hand away, saying, “I have no wish to escape, and you have no need to kill me; you killed me long ago! As to telling of you-I may do so or not, as God shall direct.”

Next day, when the convicts were led out to work, the convoy soldiers noticed that one or other of the prisoners emptied some earth out of his boots. The prison was searched and the tunnel found. The Governor came and questioned all the prisoners to find out who had dug the hole. They all denied any knowledge of it. Those who knew would not betray Makar Semyonich, knowing he would be flogged almost to death. At last the Governor turned to Aksionov whom he knew to be a just man, and said:

“You are a truthful old man; tell me, before God, who dug the hole?”

Makar Semyonich stood as if he were quite unconcerned, looking at the Governor and not so much as glancing at Aksionov. Aksionov’s lips and hands trembled, and for a long time he could not utter a word. He thought, “Why should I screen him who ruined my life? Let him pay for what I have suffered. But if I tell, they will probably flog the life out of him, and maybe I suspect him wrongly. And, after all, what good would it be to me?”

“Well, old man,” repeated the Governor, “tell me the truth: who has been digging under the wall?”

Aksionov glanced at Makar Semyonich, and said, “I cannot say, your honour. It is not God’s will that I should tell! Do what you like with me; I am in your hands.”

However much the Governor tried, Aksionov would say no more, and so the matter had to be left.

That night, when Aksionov was lying on his bed and just beginning to doze, some one came quietly and sat down on his bed. He peered through the darkness and recognised Makar.

“What more do you want of me?” asked Aksionov. “Why have you come here?”

Makar Semyonich was silent. So Aksionov sat up and said, “What do you want? Go away, or I will call the guard!”

Makar Semyonich bent close over Aksionov, and whispered, “Ivan Dmitrich, forgive me!”

“What for?” asked Aksionov.

“It was I who killed the merchant and hid the knife among your things. I meant to kill you too, but I heard a noise outside, so I hid the knife in your bag and escaped out of the window.”

Aksionov was silent, and did not know what to say. Makar Semyonich slid off the bed-shelf and knelt upon the ground. “Ivan Dmitrich,” said he, “forgive me! For the love of God, forgive me! I will confess that it was I who killed the merchant, and you will be released and can go to your home.”

“It is easy for you to talk,” said Aksionov, “but I have suffered for you these twenty-six years. Where could I go to now?... My wife is dead, and my children have forgotten me. I have nowhere to go...”

Makar Semyonich did not rise, but beat his head on the floor. “Ivan Dmitrich, forgive me!” he cried. “When they flogged me with the knot it was not so hard to bear as it is to see you now... yet you had pity on me, and did not tell. For Christ’s sake forgive me, wretch that I am!” And he began to sob.

When Aksionov heard him sobbing he, too, began to weep. “God will forgive you!” said he. “Maybe I am a hundred times worse than you.” And at these words his heart grew light, and the longing for home left him. He no longer had any desire to leave the prison, but only hoped for his last hour to come.

In spite of what Aksionov had said, Makar Semyonich confessed his guilt. But when the order for his release came, Aksionov was already dead.

A RUSSIAN CHRISTMAS PARTY

Count Rostow's affairs were going from bad to worse. He was of a warm, generous nature, with unlimited faith in his servants, and hence was blind to the mismanagement and dishonesty which had sapped his fortune. The possessor of a handsome establishment at the Russian capital, Moscow, the owner of rich provincial estates, and the inheritor of a noble name and wealth, he was nevertheless on the verge of ruin. He had given up his appointment as *Marechal de la Noblesse*, which he had gone to his seat of Otradnoe to assume, because it entailed too many expenses; and yet there was no improvement in the state of his finances.

Nicolas and Natacha, his son and daughter, often found their father and mother in anxious consultation, talking in low tones of the sale of their Moscow house or of their property in the neighborhood. Having thus retired into private life, the count now gave neither fetes nor entertainments. Life at Otradnoe was much less gay than in past years; still, the house and domain were as full of servants as ever, and twenty persons or more sat down to dinner daily. These were dependents, friends, and intimates, who were regarded almost as part of the family, or at any rate seemed unable to tear themselves away from it: among them a musician named Dimmler and his wife, Loghel the dancing-master and his family, and old *Mlle.* Below, former governess of Natacha and Sonia, the count's niece and adopted child, and now the tutor of Petia, his younger son; besides others who found it simpler to live at the count's expense than at their own. Thus, though there were no more festivities, life was carried on almost as expensively as of old, and neither the master nor the mistress ever imagined any change possible. Nicolas, again, had added to the hunting establishment; there were still fifty horses in the stables, still fifteen drivers; handsome presents were given on all birthdays and fete days, which invariably wound up as of old with a grand dinner to all the neighborhood; the count still played whist or boston, invariably letting his cards be seen by his friends, who were always ready to make up his table, and relieve him without hesitation of the few hundred rubles which constituted their principal income. The old man marched on blindfold through the tangle of his pecuniary difficulties, trying to conceal them, and only succeeding in augmenting them; having neither the courage nor the patience to untie the knots one by one.

The loving heart by his side foresaw their children's ruin, but she could not accuse her husband, who was, alas! too old for amendment; she could only seek some remedy for the disaster. From her woman's point of view there was but one: Nicolas's marriage, namely, with some rich heiress. She clung desperately to this last chance of salvation; but if her son should refuse the wife she should propose to him, every hope of reinstating their fortune would vanish. The young lady whom she had in view was the daughter of people of the highest respectability, whom the Rostows had known from her infancy: Julie Karaguine, who, by the death of her second brother, had suddenly come into great wealth.

The countess herself wrote to *Mme.* Karaguine to ask her whether she could regard the match with favor, and received a most flattering answer. Indeed, *Mme.* Karaguine invited Nicolas to her house at Moscow, to give her daughter an opportunity of deciding for herself.

Nicolas had often heard his mother say, with tears in her eyes, that her dearest wish was to see him married. The fulfilment of this wish would sweeten her remaining days, she would say, adding covert hints as to a charming girl who would exactly suit him. One day she took the opportunity of speaking plainly to him of Julie's charms and merits, and urged him to spend a short time in Moscow before Christmas. Nicolas, who had no difficulty in guessing what she was aiming at, persuaded her to be explicit on the matter, and she owned frankly that her hope was to see their sinking fortunes restored by his marriage with her dear Julie!

"Then, mother, if I loved a penniless girl, you would desire me to sacrifice my feelings and my honor – to marry solely for money?"

"Nay, nay; you have misunderstood me," she said, not knowing how to excuse her mercenary hopes. "I wish only for your happiness!" And then, conscious that this was not her sole aim, and that she was not perfectly honest, she burst into tears.

"Do not cry, mamma; you have only to say that you really and truly desire it, and you know I would give my life to see you happy; that I would sacrifice everything, even my feelings."

But this was not his mother's notion. She asked no sacrifice, she would have none; she would sooner have sacrificed herself, if it had been possible.

"Say no more about it; you do not understand," she said, drying away her tears.

"How could she think of such a marriage?" thought Nicolas. "Does she

think that because Sonia is poor I do not love her? And yet I should be a thousand times happier with her than with a doll like Julie.”

He stayed in the country, and his mother did not revert to the subject. Still, as she saw the growing intimacy between Nicolas and Sonia, she could not help worrying Sonia about every little thing, and speaking to her with colder formality. Sometimes she reproached herself for these continual pin-pricks of annoyance, and was quite vexed with the poor girl for submitting to them with such wonderful humility and sweetness, for taking every opportunity of showing her devoted gratitude, and for loving Nicolas with a faithful and disinterested affection which commanded her admiration.

Just about this time a letter came from Prince Andre, dated from Rome, whither he had gone to pass the year of probation demanded by his father as a condition to giving consent to his son’s marriage with the Countess Natacha. It was the fourth the Prince had written since his departure. He ought long since to have been on his way home, he said, but the heat of the summer had caused the wound he had received at Austerlitz to reopen, and this compelled him to postpone his return till early in January.

Natacha, though she was so much in love that her very passion for Prince Andre had made her day-dreams happy, had hitherto been open to all the bright influences of her young life; but now, after nearly four months of parting, she fell into a state of extreme melancholy, and gave way to it completely. She bewailed her hard fate, she bewailed the time that was slipping away and lost to her, while her heart ached with the dull craving to love and be loved. Nicolas, too, had nearly spent his leave from his regiment, and the anticipation of his departure added gloom to the saddened household.

Christmas came; but, excepting the pompous high Mass and the other religious ceremonies, the endless string of neighbors and servants with the regular compliments of the season, and the new gowns which made their first appearance on the occasion, nothing more than usual happened on that day, or more extraordinary than twenty degrees of frost, with brilliant sunshine, a still atmosphere, and at night a glorious starry sky.

After dinner, on the third day of Christmas-tide, when everyone had settled into his own corner once more, ennui reigned supreme throughout the house. Nicolas, who had been paying a round of visits in the neighborhood, was fast asleep in the drawing-room. The old count had followed his example in his room. Sonia, seated at a table in the sitting-room, was copying a drawing. The countess was playing out a “patience,” and Nastacia Ivanovna,

the old buffoon, with his peevish face, sitting in a window with two old women, did not say a word.

Natacha came into the room, and, after leaning over Sonia for a minute or two to examine her work, went over to her mother and stood still in front of her.

The countess looked up. "Why are you wandering about like a soul in torment? What do you want?" she said.

"Want! I want him!" replied Natacha, shortly, and her eyes glowed. "Now, here – at once!"

Her mother gazed at her anxiously.

"Do not look at me like that; you will make me cry."

"Sit down here."

"Mamma, I want him, I want him! Why must I die of weariness?" Her voice broke and tears started from her eyes. She hastily quitted the drawing-room and went to the housekeeper's room, where an old servant was scolding one of the girls who had just come in breathless from out-of-doors.

"There is a time for all things," growled the old woman. "You have had time enough for play."

"Oh, leave her in peace, Kondratievna," said Natacha. "Run away, Mavroucha – go."

Pursuing her wandering, Natacha went into the hall; an old man-servant was playing cards with two of the boys. Her entrance stopped their game and they rose. "And what am I to say to these?" thought she.

"Nikita, would you please go – what on earth can I ask for? – go and find me a cock; and you, Micha, a handful of corn."

"A handful of corn?" said Micha, laughing.

"Go, go at once," said the old man.

"And you, Fedor, can you give me a piece of chalk?"

Then she went on to the servants' hall and ordered the samovar to be got ready, though it was not yet tea-time; she wanted to try her power over Foka, the old butler, the most morose and disobliging of all the servants. He could not believe his ears, and asked her if she really meant it. "What next will our young lady want?" muttered Foka, affecting to be very cross.

No one gave so many orders as Natacha, no one sent them on so many errands at once. As soon as a servant came in sight she seemed to invent some want or message; she could not help it. It seemed as though she wanted to try her power over them; to see whether, some fine day, one or another

would not rebel against her tyranny; but, on the contrary, they always flew to obey her more readily than anyone else.

“And now what shall I do, where can I go?” thought she, as she slowly went along the corridor, where she presently met the buffoon.

“Nastacia Ivanovna,” said she, “if I ever have children, what will they be?”

“You! Fleas and grasshoppers, you may depend upon it!”

Natacha went on. “Good God! have mercy, have mercy!” she said to herself. “Wherever I go it is always, always the same. I am so weary; what shall I do?”

Skipping lightly from step to step, she went to the upper story and dropped in on the Loghels. Two governesses were sitting chatting with M. and *Mme.* Loghel; dessert, consisting of dried fruit, was on the table, and they were eagerly discussing the cost of living at Moscow and Odessa. Natacha took a seat for a moment, listened with pensive attention, and then jumped up again. “The island of Madagascar!” she murmured, “Ma-da-gas-car!” and she separated the syllables. Then she left the room without answering *Mme.* Schoss, who was utterly mystified by her strange exclamation.

She next met Petia and a companion, both very full of some fireworks which were to be let off that evening. “Petia!” she exclaimed, “carry me down-stairs!” And she sprang upon his back, throwing her arms round his neck; and, laughing and galloping, they thus scrambled along to the head of the stairs.

“Thank you, that will do. Madagascar!” she repeated; and, jumping down, she ran down the flight.

After thus inspecting her dominions, testing her power, and convincing herself that her subjects were docile, and that there was no novelty to be got out of them, Natacha settled herself in the darkest corner of the music-room with her guitar, striking the bass strings, and trying to make an accompaniment to an air from an opera that she and Prince Andre had once heard together at St. Petersburg. The uncertain chords which her unpracticed fingers sketched out would have struck the least experienced ear as wanting in harmony and musical accuracy, while to her excited imagination they brought a whole train of memories. Leaning against the wall and half hidden by a cabinet, with her eyes fixed on a thread of light that came under the door from the rooms beyond, she listened in ecstasy and dreamed of the past.

Sonia crossed the room with a glass in her hand. Natacha glanced round

at her and again fixed her eyes on the streak of light. She had the strange feeling of having once before gone through the same experience – sat in the same place, surrounded by the same details, and watching Sonia pass carrying a tumbler. “Yes, it was exactly the same,” she thought.

“Sonia, what is this tune?” she said, playing a few notes.

“What, are you there?” said Sonia, startled. “I do not know,” she said, coming closer to listen, “unless it is from ‘La Tempete’;” but she spoke doubtfully.

“It was exactly so,” thought Natacha. “She started as she came forward, smiling so gently; and I thought then, as I think now, that there is something in her which is quite lacking in me. No,” she said aloud, “you are quite out; it is the chorus from the ‘Porteur d’Eau’ – listen,” and she hummed the air. “Where are you going?”

“For some fresh water to finish my drawing.”

“You are always busy and I never. Where is Nicolas?”

“Asleep, I think.”

“Go and wake him, Sonia. Tell him to come and sing.”

Sonia went, and Natacha relapsed into dreaming and wondering how it had all happened. Not being able to solve the puzzle, she drifted into reminiscence once more. She could see him – *him* – and feel his impassioned eyes fixed on her face. “Oh, make haste back! I am so afraid he will not come yet! Besides, it is all very well, but I am growing old; I shall be quite different from what I am now! Who knows? Perhaps he will come to-day! Perhaps he is here already! Here in the drawing-room. Perhaps he came yesterday and I have forgotten.”

She rose, laid down the guitar, and went into the next room. All the household party were seated round the tea-table, – the professors, the governesses, the guests; the servants were waiting on one and another – but there was no Prince Andre.

“Ah, here she is,” said her father. “Come and sit down here.” But Natacha stopped by her mother without heeding his bidding.

“Oh, mamma, bring him to me, give him to me soon, very soon,” she murmured, swallowing down a sob. Then she sat down and listened to the others. “Good God! always the same people! always the same thing! Papa holds his cup as he always does, and blows his tea to cool it as he did yesterday, and as he will tomorrow.”

She felt a sort of dull rebellion against them all; she hated them for

always being the same.

After tea Sonia, Natacha, and Nicolas huddled together in their favorite, snug corner of the drawing-room; that was where they talked freely to each other.

“Do you ever feel,” Natacha asked her brother, “as if there was nothing left to look forward to; as if you had had all your share of happiness, and were not so much weary as utterly dull?”

“Of course I have. Very often I have seen my friends and fellow-officers in the highest spirits and been just as jolly myself, and suddenly have been struck so dull and dismal, have so hated life, that I have wondered whether we were not all to die at once. I remember one day, for instance, when I was with the regiment; the band was playing, and I had such a fit of melancholy that I never even thought of going to the promenade.”

“How well I understand that! I recollect once,” Natacha went on, “once when I was a little girl, I was punished for having eaten some plums, I think. I had not done it, and you were all dancing, and I was left alone in the school-room. How I cried! cried because I was so sorry for myself, and so vexed with you all for making me so unhappy.”

“I remember; and I went to comfort you and did not know how; we were funny children then; I had a toy with bells that jingled, and I made you a present of it.”

“Do you remember,” said Natacha, “long before that, when we were no bigger than my hand, my uncle called us into his room, where it was quite dark, and suddenly we saw -”

“A negro!” interrupted Nicolas, smiling at her recollection. “To be sure. I can see him now; and to this day I wonder whether it was a dream or a reality, or mere fancy invented afterwards.”

“He had white teeth and stared at us with his black eyes.”

“Do you remember him, Sonia?”

“Yes, yes – but very dimly.”

“But papa and mamma have always declared that no negro ever came to the house. And the eggs; do you remember the eggs we used to roll up at Easter; and one day how two little grinning old women came up through the floor and began to spin round the table?”

“Of course. And how papa used to put on his fur coat and fire off his gun from the balcony. And don t you remember -?” And so they went on recalling, one after the other, not the bitter memories of old age, but the

bright pictures of early childhood, which float and fade on a distant horizon of poetic vagueness, midway between reality and dreams. Sonia remembered being frightened once at the sight of Nicolas in his braided jacket, and her nurse promising her that she should someday have a frock trimmed from top to bottom.

“And they told me you had been found in the garden under a cabbage,” said Natacha. “I dared not say it was not true, but it puzzled me tremendously.”

A door opened, and a woman put in her head, exclaiming, “Mademoiselle, mademoiselle, they have fetched the cock!”

“I do not want it now; send it away again, Polia.” said Natacha.

Dimmler, who had meanwhile come into the room, went up to the harp, which stood in a corner, and in taking off the cover made the strings ring discordantly.

“Edward Karlovitch, play my favorite nocturne – Field’s,” cried the countess, from the adjoining room.

Dimmler struck a chord. “How quiet you young people are,” he said, addressing them.

“Yes, we are studying philosophy,” said Natacha, and they went on talking of their dreams.

Dimmler had no sooner begun his nocturne than Natacha, crossing the room on tiptoe, seized the wax-light that was burning on the table and carried it into the next room; then she stole back to her seat, it was now quite dark in the larger room, especially in their corner, but the silvery moonbeams came in at the wide windows and lay in broad sheets on the floor.

“Do you know,” whispered Natacha, while Dimmler, after playing the nocturne, let his fingers wander over the strings, uncertain what to play next, “when I go on remembering one thing beyond another, I go back so far, so far, that at last I remember things that happened before I was born, and -”

“That is metempsychosis,” interrupted Sonia, with a reminiscence of her early lessons. “The Egyptians believed that our souls had once inhabited the bodies of animals, and would return to animals again after our death.”

“I do not believe that,” said Natacha, still in a low voice, though the music had ceased. “But I am quite sure that we were angels once, somewhere there beyond, or, perhaps, even here; and that is the reason we remember a previous existence.”

“May I join the party?” asked Dimmler, coming towards them.

“If we were once angels, how is it that we have fallen lower?”

“Lower? Who says that it is lower? Who knows what I was?” Natacha retorted with full conviction. “Since the soul is immortal, and I am to live forever in the future, I must have existed in the past, so I have eternity behind me, too.”

“Yes; but it is very difficult to conceive of that eternity,” said Dimmler, whose ironical smile had died away.

“Why?” asked Natacha. “After to-day comes tomorrow, and then the day after, and so on forever; yesterday has been, tomorrow will be -”

“Natacha, now it is your turn; sing me something,” said her mother. “What are you doing in that corner like a party of conspirators?”

“I am not at all in the humor, mamma,” said she; nevertheless she rose. Nicolas sat down to the piano; and standing, as usual, in the middle of the room, where the voice sounded best, she sang her mother’s favorite ballad.

Though she had said she was not in the humor, it was long since Natacha had sung so well as she did that evening, and long before she sang so well again. Her father, who was talking over business with Mitenka in his room, hurriedly gave him some final instructions as soon as he heard the first note, as a schoolboy scrambles through his tasks to get to his play; but as the steward did not go, he sat in silence, listening, while Mitenka, too, standing in his presence, listened with evident satisfaction. Nicolas did not take his eyes off his sister’s face, and only breathed when she took breath. Sonia was under the spell of that exquisite voice and thinking of the gulf of difference that lay between her and her friend, full conscious that she could never exercise such fascination. The old countess had paused in her “patience,” – a sad, fond smile played on her lips, her eyes were full of tears, and she shook her head, remembering her own youth, looking forward to her daughter’s future and reflecting on her strange prospects of marriage.

Dimmler, sitting by her side, listened with rapture, his eyes half closed.

“She really has a marvelous gift!” he exclaimed. “She has nothing to learn, – such power, such sweetness, such roundness!”

“And how much I fear for her happiness!” replied the countess, who in her mother’s heart could feel the flame that must someday be fatal to her child’s peace.

Natacha was still singing when Petia dashed noisily into the room to announce, in triumphant tones, that a party of mummers had come.

“Idiot!” exclaimed Natacha, stopping short, and, dropping into a chair,

she began to sob so violently that it was some time before she could recover herself. "It is nothing, mamma, really nothing at all," she declared, trying to smile. "Only Petia frightened me; nothing more." And her tears flowed afresh.

All the servants had dressed up, some as bears, Turks, tavern-keepers, or fine ladies; others as mongrel monsters. Bringing with them the chill of the night outside, they did not at first venture any farther than the hall; by degrees, however, they took courage; pushing each other forward for self-protection, they all soon came into the music-room. Once there, their shyness thawed; they became expansively merry, and singing, dancing, and sports were soon the order of the day. The countess, after looking at them and identifying them all, went back into the sitting-room, leaving her husband, whose jovial face encouraged them to enjoy themselves.

The young people had all vanished; but half an hour later an old marquise with patches appeared on the scene – none other than Nicolas; Petia as a Turk; a clown – Dimmler; a hussar – Natacha; and a Circassian – Sonia. Both the girls had blackened their eyebrows and given themselves mustaches with burned cork.

After being received with well-feigned surprise, and recognized more or less quickly, the children, who were very proud of their costumes, unanimously declared that they must go and display them elsewhere. Nicolas, who was dying to take them all for a long drive *en troika*, proposed that, as the roads were in splendid order, they should go, a party of ten, to the Little Uncle's.

"You will disturb the old man, and that will be all," said the countess. "Why, he has not even room for you all to get into the house! If you must go out, you had better go to the Melukows'."

Mme. Melukow was a widow living in the neighborhood; her house, full of children of all ages, with tutors and governesses, was distant only four verstas from Otradnoe.

"A capital idea, my dear," cried the count, enchanted. "I will dress up in costume and go, too. I will wake them up, I warrant you!"

But this did not at all meet his wife's views. Perfect madness! For him to go out with his gouty feet in such cold weather was sheer folly! The count gave way, and *Mme.* Schoss volunteered to chaperon the girls. Sonia's was by far the most successful disguise; her fierce eyebrows and mustache were wonderfully becoming, her pretty features gained expression, and she wore

the dress of a man with unexpected swagger and smartness. Something in her inmost soul told her that this evening would seal her fate.

In a few minutes four sleighs with three horses abreast to each, their harness jingling with bells, drew up in a line before the steps, the runners creaking and crunching over the frozen snow. Natacha was the foremost, and the first to tune her spirits to the pitch of this carnival freak. This mirth, in fact, proved highly infectious, and reached its height of tumult and excitement when the party went down the steps and packed themselves into the sleighs, laughing and shouting to each other at the top of their voices. Two of the sleighs were drawn by light cart-horses, to the third the count's carriage horses were harnessed, and one of these was reputed a famous trotter from Orlov's stable; the fourth sleigh, with its rough-coated, black shaft-horse, was Nicolas's private property. In his marquis costume, over which he had thrown his hussar's cloak, fastened with a belt round the waist, he stood gathering up the reins. The moon was shining brightly, reflected in the plating of the harness and in the horses' anxious eyes as they turned their heads in uneasy amazement at the noisy group that clustered under the dark porch. Natacha, Sonia, and *Mme. Schoss*, with two women servants, got into Nicolas's sleigh; Dimmler and his wife, with Petia, into the count's; the rest of the mummers packed into the other sleighs.

"Lead the way, Zakhare!" cried Nicolas, to his father's coachman, promising himself the pleasure of outstripping him presently; the count's sleigh swayed and strained, the runners, which the frost had already glued to the ground, creaked, the bells rang out, the horses closed up for a pull, and off they went over the glittering, hard snow, flinging it up right and left like spray of powdered sugar. Nicolas started next, and the others followed along the narrow way, with no less jingling and creaking. While they drove under the wall of the park the shadows of the tall, skeleton trees lay on the road, checkering the broad moonlight; but as soon as they had left it behind them, the wide and spotless plain spread on all sides, its whiteness broken by myriads of flashing sparks and spangles of reflected light. Suddenly a rut caused the foremost sleigh to jolt violently, and then the others in succession; they fell away a little, their intrusive clatter breaking the supreme and solemn silence of the night.

"A hare's tracks!" exclaimed Natacha, and her voice pierced the frozen air like an arrow.

"How light it is, Nicolas," said Sonia. Nicolas turned round to look at the

pretty face with its black mustache, under the sable hood, looking at once so far away and so close in the moonshine. "It is not Sonia at all," he said, smiling.

"Why, what is the matter?"

"Nothing," said he, returning to his former position.

When they got out on the high-road, beaten and ploughed by horses' hoofs and polished with the tracks of sleighs, his steeds began to pull and go at a great pace. The near horse, turning away his head, was galloping rather wildly, while the horse in the shafts pricked his ears and still seemed to doubt whether the moment for a dash had come. Zakhare's sleigh, lost in the distance, was no more than a black spot on the white snow, and as he drew farther away the ringing of the bells was fainter and fainter; only the shouts and songs of the maskers rang through the calm, clear night.

"On you go, my beauties!" cried Nicolas, shaking the reins and raising his whip. The sleigh seemed to leap forward, but the sharp air that cut their faces and the flying pace of the two outer horses alone gave them any idea of the speed they were making. Nicolas glanced back at the other two drivers; they were shouting and urging their shaft-horses with cries and cracking of whips, so as not to be quite left behind; Nicolas's middle horse, swinging steadily along under the shaft-bow, kept up his regular pace, quite ready to go twice as fast the moment he should be called upon.

They soon overtook the first troika, and after going down a slope they came upon a wide cross-road running by the side of a meadow.

"Where are we, I wonder," thought Nicolas; "this must be the field and slope by the river. No – I do not know where we are! This is all new and unfamiliar to me! God only knows where we are! But no matter!" And smacking his whip with a will, he went straight ahead. Zakhare held in his beasts for an instant, and turned his face, all fringed with frost, to look at Nicolas, who came flying onward.

"Steady there, sir!" cried the coachman, and leaning forward, with a click of his tongue he urged his horses in their turn to their utmost speed. For a few minutes the sleighs ran equal, but before long, in spite of all Zakhare could do, Nicolas gained on him and at last flew past him like a lightning flash; a cloud of fine snow, kicked up by the horses, came showering down on the rival sleigh; the women squeaked, and the two teams had a struggle for the precedence, their shadows crossing and mingling on the snow.

Then Nicolas, moderating his speed, looked about him; before, behind,

and on each side of him stretched the fairy scene; a plain strewn with stars and flooded with light.

“To the left, Zakhare says. Why to the left?” thought he. “We were going to the Melukows’. But we are going where fate directs or as Heaven may guide us. It is all very strange and most delightful, is it not?” he said, turning to the others.

“Oh! look at his eyelashes and beard; they are quite white!” exclaimed one of the sweet young men, with penciled mustache and arched eyebrows.

“That I believe is Natacha?” said Nicolas. “And that little Circassian – who is he? I do not know him, but I like his looks uncommonly! Are you not frozen?” Their answer was a shout of laughter.

Dimmler was talking himself hoarse, and he must be saying very funny things, for the party in his sleigh were in fits of laughing.

“Better and better,” said Nicolas to himself; “now we are in an enchanted forest – the black shadows lie across a flooring of diamonds and mix with the sparkling of gems. That might be a fairy palace, out there, built of large blocks of marble and jeweled tiles? Did I not hear the howl of wild beasts in the distance? Supposing it were only Melukovka that I am coming to after all! On my word, it would be no less miraculous to have reached port after steering so completely at random!”

It was, in fact, Melukovka, for he could see the house servants coming out on the balcony with lights, and then down to meet them, only too glad of this unexpected diversion.

“Who is there?” a voice asked within.

“The mummers from Count Rostow’s; they are his teams,” replied the servants.

* * *

Pelagueia Danilovna Melukow, a stout and commanding personality, in spectacles and a flowing dressing-gown, was sitting in her drawing-room surrounded by her children, whom she was doing her best to amuse by modelling heads in wax and tracing the shadows they cast on the wall, when steps and voices were heard in the ante-room. Hussars, witches, clowns, and bears were rubbing their faces, which were scorched by the cold and covered with rime, or shaking the snow off their clothes. As soon as they had cast off their furs they rushed into the large drawing-room, which was hastily lighted up. Dimmler, the clown, and Nicolas, the marquise, performed a dance, while

the others stood close along the wall, the children shouting and jumping about them with glee.

“It is impossible to know who is who – can that really be Natacha? Look at her; does not she remind you of some one? Edward, before Karlovitch, how fine you are! and how beautifully you dance! Oh! and that splendid Circassian – why, it is Sonia! What a kind and delightful surprise; we were so desperately dull. Ha, ha! what a beautiful hussar! A real hussar, or a real monkey of a boy – which is he, I wonder? I cannot look at you without laughing.” They all shouted and laughed and talked at once, at the top of their voices.

Natacha, to whom the Melukows were devoted, soon vanished with them to their own room, where corks and various articles of men’s clothing were brought to them, and clutched by bare arms through a half-open door. Ten minutes later all the young people of the house rejoined the company, equally unrecognizable. Pelagueia Danilovna, going and coming among them all, with her spectacles on her nose and a quiet smile, had seats arranged and a supper laid out for the visitors, masters and servants alike. She looked straight in the face of each in turn, recognizing no one of the motley crew – neither the Rostows, nor Dimmler, nor even her own children, nor any of the clothes they figured in.

“That one, who is she?” she asked the governess, stopping a Kazan Tartar, who was, in fact, her own daughter. “One of the Rostows, is it not? And you, gallant hussar, what regiment do you belong to?” she went on, addressing Natacha. “Give some *pastila* to this Turkish lady,” she cried to the butler; “it is not forbidden by her religion, I believe.”

At the sight of some of the reckless dancing which the mummers performed under the shelter of their disguise, Pelagueia Danilovna could not help hiding her face in her handkerchief, while her huge person shook with uncontrollable laughter – the laugh of a kindly matron, frankly jovial and gay.

When they had danced all the national dances, ending with the *Horovody*, she placed every one, both masters and servants, in a large circle, holding a cord with a ring and a roble, and for a while they played games. An hour after, when the finery was the worse for wear and heat and laughter had removed much of the charcoal, Pelagueia Danilovna could recognize them, compliment the girls on the success of their disguise, and thank the whole party for the amusement they had given her. Supper was served for the

company in the drawing-room, and for the servants in the large dining-room.

“You should try your fortune in the bathroom over there; that is enough to frighten you!” said an old maid who lived with the Melukows.

“Why?” said the eldest girl.

“Oh! you would never dare to do it; you must be very brave.”

“Well, I will go,” said Sonia.

“Tell us what happened to that young girl, you know,” said the youngest Melukow.

“Once a young girl went to the bath, taking with her a cock and two plates with knives and forks, which is what you must do; and she waited. Suddenly she heard horses’ bells – someone was coming; he stopped, came up-stairs, and she saw an officer walk into the room; a real live officer – at least so he seemed – who sat down opposite to her where the second cover was laid.”

“Oh! how horrible!” exclaimed Natacha, wide-eyed. “And he spoke to her – really spoke?”

“Yes, just as if he had really been a man. He begged and prayed her to listen to him, and all she had to do was to refuse him and hold out till the cock crowed; but she was too much frightened. She covered her face with her hands, and he clasped her in his arms; luckily some girls who were on the watch rushed in when she screamed.”

“Why do you terrify them with such nonsense?” said Pelagueia Danilovna.

“But, mamma, you know you wanted to try your fortune too.”

“And if you try your fortune in a barn, what do you do?” asked Sonia.

“That is quite simple. You must go to the barn – now, for instance – and listen. If you hear thrashing, it is for ill-luck; if you hear grain dropping, that is good.”

“Tell us, mother, what happened to you in the barn.”

“It is so long ago,” said the mother, with a smile, “that I have quite forgotten; besides, not one of you is brave enough to try it.”

“Yes, I will go,” said Sonia. “Let me go.”

“Go by all means if you are not afraid.”

“May I, Madame Schoss?” said Sonia to the governess.

Now, whether playing games or sitting quietly and chatting, Nicolas had not left Sonia’s side the whole evening; he felt as if he had seen her for the first time, and only just now appreciated all her merits. Bright, bewitchingly pretty in her quaint costume, and excited as she very rarely was, she had

completely fascinated him.

“What a simpleton I must have been!” thought he, responding in thought to those sparkling eyes and that triumphant smile which had revealed to him a little dimple at the tip of her mustache that he had never observed before.

“I am afraid of nothing,” she declared. She rose, asked her way, precisely, to the barn, and every detail as to what she was to expect, waiting there in total silence; then she threw a fur cloak over her shoulders, glanced at Nicolas, and went on.

She went along the corridor and down the back-stairs; while Nicolas, saying that the heat of the room was too much for him, slipped out by the front entrance. It was as cold as ever, and the moon seemed to be shining even more brightly than before. The snow at her feet was strewn with stars, while their sisters overhead twinkled in the deep gloom of the sky, and she soon looked away from them, back to the gleaming earth in its radiant mantle of ermine.

Nicolas hurried across the hall, turned the corner of the house, and went past the side door where Sonia was to come out. Half-way to the barn stacks of wood, in the full moonlight, threw their shadows on the path, and beyond, an alley of lime-trees traced a tangled pattern on the snow with the fine crossed lines of their leafless twigs. The beams of the house and its snow-laden roof looked as if they had been hewn out of a block of opal, with iridescent lights where the facets caught the silvery moonlight. Suddenly a bough fell crashing off a tree in the garden; then all was still again. Sonia’s heart beat high with gladness; as if she were drinking in not common air, but some life-giving elixir of eternal youth and joy.

“Straight on, if you please, miss, and on no account look behind you.”

“I am not afraid,” said Sonia, her little shoes tapping the stone steps and then crunching the carpet of snow as she ran to meet Nicolas, who was within a couple of yards of her. And yet not the Nicolas of every-day life. What had transfigured him so completely? Was it his woman’s costume with frizzed-out hair, or was it that radiant smile which he so rarely wore, and which at this moment illumined his face?

“But Sonia is quite unlike herself, and yet she is herself,” thought Nicolas on his side, looking down at the sweet little face in the moonlight. He slipped his arms under the fur cloak that wrapped her, and drew her to him, and he kissed her lips, which still tasted of the burned cork that had blackened her mustache.

“Nicolas – Sonia,” they whispered; and Sonia put her little hands round his face. Then, hand in hand, they ran to the barn and back, and each went in by the different doors they had come out of.

Natacha, who had noted everything, managed so that she, *Mme. Schoss*, and Dimmler should return in one sleigh, while the maids went with Nicolas and Sonia in another. Nicolas was in no hurry to get home; he could not help looking at Sonia and trying to find under her disguise the true Sonia – his Sonia, from whom nothing now could ever part him. The magical effects of moonlight, the remembrance of that kiss on her sweet lips, the dizzy flight of the snow-clad ground under the horses’ hoofs, the black sky, studded with diamonds, that bent over their heads, the icy air that seemed to give vigor to his lungs – all was enough to make him fancy that they were transported to a land of magic.

“Sonia, are you not cold?”

“No; and you?”

Nicolas pulled up, and giving the reins to a man to drive, he ran back to the sleigh in which Natacha was sitting.

“Listen,” he said, in a whisper and in French; “I have made up my mind to tell Sonia.”

“And you have spoken to her?” exclaimed Natacha, radiant with joy.

“Oh, Natacha, how queer that mustache makes you look! Are you glad?”

“Glad! I am delighted. I did not say anything, you know, but I have been so vexed with you. She is a jewel, a heart of gold. I – I am often naughty, and I have no right to have all the happiness to myself now. Go, go back to her.”

“No. Wait one minute. Mercy, how funny you look!” he repeated, examining her closely and discovering in her face, too, an unwonted tenderness and emotion that struck him deeply. “Natacha, is there not some magic at the bottom of it all, heh?”

“You have acted very wisely. Go.”

“If I had ever seen Natacha look as she does at this moment I should have asked her advice and have obeyed her, whatever she had bid me do; and all would have gone well. So you are glad?” he said, aloud. “I have done right?”

“Yes, yes, of course you have! I was quite angry with mamma the other day about you two. Mamma would have it that Sonia was running after you. I will not allow anyone to say – no, nor even to think – any evil of her, for she is sweetness and truth itself.”

“So much the better.” Nicolas jumped down and in a few long strides

overtook his own sleigh, where the little Circassian received him with a smile from under the fur hood; and the Circassian was Sonia, and Sonia beyond a doubt would be his beloved little wife!

When they got home the two girls went into the countess's room and gave her an account of their expedition; then they went to bed. Without stopping to wipe off their mustaches they stood chattering as they undressed; they had so much to say of their happiness, their future prospects, the friendship between their husbands:

"But, oh! when will it all be? I am so afraid it will never come to pass," said Natacha, as she went toward a table on which two looking-glasses stood.

"Sit down," said Sonia, "and look in the glass; perhaps you will see something about it." Natacha lighted two pairs of candles and seated herself. "I certainly see a pair of mustaches," she said, laughing.

"You should not laugh," said the maid, very gravely.

Natacha settled herself to gaze without blinking into the mirror; she put on a solemn face and sat in silence for some time, wondering what she should see. Would a coffin rise before her, or would Prince Andre presently stand revealed against the confused background in the shining glass? Her eyes were weary and could hardly distinguish even the flickering light of the candles. But with the best will in the world she could see nothing; not a spot to suggest the image either of a coffin or of a human form. She rose.

"Why do other people see things and I never see anything at all? Take my place, Sonia; you must look for yourself and for me, too. I am so frightened; if I could but know!"

Sonia sat down and fixed her eyes on the mirror.

"Sofia Alexandrovna will be sure to see something," whispered Douniacha; "but you always are laughing at such things." Sonia heard the remark and Natacha's whispered reply: "Yes, she is sure to see something; she did last year." Three minutes they waited in total silence. "She is sure to see something," Natacha repeated, trembling.

Sonia started back, covered her face with one hand, and cried out:

"Natacha!"

"You saw something? What did you see?" And Natacha rushed forward to hold up the glass.

But Sonia had seen nothing; her eyes were getting dim, and she was on the point of giving it up when Natacha's exclamation had stopped her; she did not want to disappoint them; but there is nothing so tiring as sitting

motionless. She did not know why she had called out and hidden her face.

“Did you see him?” asked Natacha.

“Yes; stop a minute. I saw him,” said Sonia, not quite sure whether “him” was to mean Nicolas or Prince Andre. “Why not make them believe that I saw something?” she thought. “A great many people have done so before, and no one can prove the contrary. Yes, I saw him,” she repeated.

“How? standing up or lying down?”

“I saw him – at first there was nothing; then suddenly I saw him lying down.”

“Andre, lying down? Then he is ill!” And Natacha gazed horror-stricken at her companion.

“Not at all; he seemed quite cheerful, on the contrary,” said she, beginning to believe in her own inventions.

“And then – Sonia, what then?”

“Then I saw only confusion – red and blue.”

“And when will he come back, Sonia? When shall I see him again? O God! I am afraid for him – afraid of everything.”

And, without listening to Sonia’s attempts at comfort, Natacha slipped into bed, and, long after the lights were out, she lay motionless but awake, her eyes fixed on the moonshine that came dimly through the frost-embroidered windows.

ANTON CHEKHOV

THE WIFE

I

I RECEIVED the following letter:

“DEAR SIR, PAVEL ANDREITCH!

“Not far from you-that is to say, in the village of Pestrovo-very distressing incidents are taking place, concerning which I feel it my duty to write to you. All the peasants of that village sold their cottages and all their belongings, and set off for the province of Tomsk, but did not succeed in getting there, and have come back. Here, of course, they have nothing now; everything belongs to other people. They have settled three or four families in a hut, so that there are no less than fifteen persons of both sexes in each hut, not counting the young children; and the long and the short of it is, there is nothing to eat. There is famine and there is a terrible pestilence of hunger, or spotted, typhus; literally every one is stricken. The doctor’s assistant says one goes into a cottage and what does one see? Every one is sick, every one delirious, some laughing, others frantic; the huts are filthy; there is no one to fetch them water, no one to give them a drink, and nothing to eat but frozen potatoes. What can Sobol (our Zemstvo doctor) and his lady assistant do when more than medicine the peasants need bread which they have not? The District Zemstvo refuses to assist them, on the ground that their names have been taken off the register of this district, and that they are now reckoned as inhabitants of Tomsk; and, besides, the Zemstvo has no money.

“Laying these facts before you, and knowing your humanity, I beg you not to refuse immediate help.

“Your well-wisher.”

Obviously the letter was written by the doctor with the animal name* or his lady assistant. Zemstvo doctors and their assistants go on for years growing more and more convinced every day that they can do *nothing*, and yet continue to receive their salaries from people who are living upon frozen potatoes, and consider they have a right to judge whether I am humane or not.

*Sobol in Russian means “sable-marten.”-TRANSLATOR’S NOTE.

Worried by the anonymous letter and by the fact that peasants came every morning to the servants’ kitchen and went down on their knees there, and that twenty sacks of rye had been stolen at night out of the barn, the wall having first been broken in, and by the general depression which was fostered by conversations, newspapers, and horrible weather-worried by all this, I worked

listlessly and ineffectively. I was writing "A History of Railways"; I had to read a great number of Russian and foreign books, pamphlets, and articles in the magazines, to make calculations, to refer to logarithms, to think and to write; then again to read, calculate, and think; but as soon as I took up a book or began to think, my thoughts were in a muddle, my eyes began blinking, I would get up from the table with a sigh and begin walking about the big rooms of my deserted country-house. When I was tired of walking about I would stand still at my study window, and, looking across the wide courtyard, over the pond and the bare young birch-trees and the great fields covered with recently fallen, thawing snow, I saw on a low hill on the horizon a group of mud-coloured huts from which a black muddy road ran down in an irregular streak through the white field. That was Pestovo, concerning which my anonymous correspondent had written to me. If it had not been for the crows who, foreseeing rain or snowy weather, floated cawing over the pond and the fields, and the tapping in the carpenter's shed, this bit of the world about which such a fuss was being made would have seemed like the Dead Sea; it was all so still, motionless, lifeless, and dreary!

My uneasiness hindered me from working and concentrating myself; I did not know what it was, and chose to believe it was disappointment. I had actually given up my post in the Department of Ways and Communications, and had come here into the country expressly to live in peace and to devote myself to writing on social questions. It had long been my cherished dream. And now I had to say good-bye both to peace and to literature, to give up everything and think only of the peasants. And that was inevitable, because I was convinced that there was absolutely nobody in the district except me to help the starving. The people surrounding me were uneducated, unintellectual, callous, for the most part dishonest, or if they were honest, they were unreasonable and unpractical like my wife, for instance. It was impossible to rely on such people, it was impossible to leave the peasants to their fate, so that the only thing left to do was to submit to necessity and see to setting the peasants to rights myself.

I began by making up my mind to give five thousand roubles to the assistance of the starving peasants. And that did not decrease, but only aggravated my uneasiness. As I stood by the window or walked about the rooms I was tormented by the question which had not occurred to me before: how this money was to be spent. To have bread bought and to go from hut to hut distributing it was more than one man could do, to say nothing of the risk

that in your haste you might give twice as much to one who was well-fed or to one who was making money out of his fellows as to the hungry. I had no faith in the local officials. All these district captains and tax inspectors were young men, and I distrusted them as I do all young people of today, who are materialistic and without ideals. The District Zemstvo, the Peasant Courts, and all the local institutions, inspired in me not the slightest desire to appeal to them for assistance. I knew that all these institutions who were busily engaged in picking out plums from the Zemstvo and the Government pie had their mouths always wide open for a bite at any other pie that might turn up.

The idea occurred to me to invite the neighbouring landowners and suggest to them to organize in my house something like a committee or a centre to which all subscriptions could be forwarded, and from which assistance and instructions could be distributed throughout the district; such an organization, which would render possible frequent consultations and free control on a big scale, would completely meet my views. But I imagined the lunches, the dinners, the suppers and the noise, the waste of time, the verbosity and the bad taste which that mixed provincial company would inevitably bring into my house, and I made haste to reject my idea.

As for the members of my own household, the last thing I could look for was help or support from them. Of my father's household, of the household of my childhood, once a big and noisy family, no one remained but the governess Mademoiselle Marie, or, as she was now called, Marya Gerasimovna, an absolutely insignificant person. She was a precise little old lady of seventy, who wore a light grey dress and a cap with white ribbons, and looked like a china doll. She always sat in the drawing-room reading.

Whenever I passed by her, she would say, knowing the reason for my brooding:

"What can you expect, Pasha? I told you how it would be before. You can judge from our servants."

My wife, Natalya Gavrilovna, lived on the lower storey, all the rooms of which she occupied. She slept, had her meals, and received her visitors downstairs in her own rooms, and took not the slightest interest in how I dined, or slept, or whom I saw. Our relations with one another were simple and not strained, but cold, empty, and dreary as relations are between people who have been so long estranged, that even living under the same roof gives no semblance of nearness. There was no trace now of the passionate and tormenting love-at one time sweet, at another bitter as wormwood-which I

had once felt for Natalya Gavrilovna. There was nothing left, either, of the outbursts of the past—the loud altercations, upbraidings, complaints, and gusts of hatred which had usually ended in my wife's going abroad or to her own people, and in my sending money in small but frequent instalments that I might sting her pride oftener. (My proud and sensitive wife and her family live at my expense, and much as she would have liked to do so, my wife could not refuse my money: that afforded me satisfaction and was one comfort in my sorrow.) Now when we chanced to meet in the corridor downstairs or in the yard, I bowed, she smiled graciously. We spoke of the weather, said that it seemed time to put in the double windows, and that some one with bells on their harness had driven over the dam. And at such times I read in her face: "I am faithful to you and am not disgracing your good name which you think so much about; you are sensible and do not worry me; we are quits."

I assured myself that my love had died long ago, that I was too much absorbed in my work to think seriously of my relations with my wife. But, alas! that was only what I imagined. When my wife talked aloud downstairs I listened intently to her voice, though I could not distinguish one word. When she played the piano downstairs I stood up and listened. When her carriage or her saddlehorse was brought to the door, I went to the window and waited to see her out of the house; then I watched her get into her carriage or mount her horse and ride out of the yard. I felt that there was something wrong with me, and was afraid the expression of my eyes or my face might betray me. I looked after my wife and then watched for her to come back that I might see again from the window her face, her shoulders, her fur coat, her hat. I felt dreary, sad, infinitely regretful, and felt inclined in her absence to walk through her rooms, and longed that the problem that my wife and I had not been able to solve because our characters were incompatible, should solve itself in the natural way as soon as possible—that is, that this beautiful woman of twenty-seven might make haste and grow old, and that my head might be grey and bald.

One day at lunch my bailiff informed me that the Pestrovo peasants had begun to pull the thatch off the roofs to feed their cattle. Marya Gerasimovna looked at me in alarm and perplexity.

"What can I do?" I said to her. "One cannot fight single-handed, and I have never experienced such loneliness as I do now. I would give a great deal to find one man in the whole province on whom I could rely."

“Invite Ivan Ivanitch,” said Marya Gerasimovna.

“To be sure!” I thought, delighted. “That is an idea! *C’est raison*,” I hummed, going to my study to write to Ivan Ivanitch. “*C’est raison, c’est raison.*”

II

Of all the mass of acquaintances who, in this house twenty-five to thirty-five years ago, had eaten, drunk, masqueraded, fallen in love, married, bored us with accounts of their splendid packs of hounds and horses, the only one still living was Ivan Ivanitch Bragin. At one time he had been very active, talkative, noisy, and given to falling in love, and had been famous for his extreme views and for the peculiar charm of his face, which fascinated men as well as women; now he was an old man, had grown corpulent, and was living out his days with neither views nor charm. He came the day after getting my letter, in the evening just as the samovar was brought into the dining-room and little Marya Gerasimovna had begun slicing the lemon.

"I am very glad to see you, my dear fellow," I said gaily, meeting him. "Why, you are stouter than ever..."

"It isn't getting stout; it's swelling," he answered. "The bees must have stung me."

With the familiarity of a man laughing at his own fatness, he put his arms round my waist and laid on my breast his big soft head, with the hair combed down on the forehead like a Little Russian's, and went off into a thin, aged laugh.

"And you go on getting younger," he said through his laugh. "I wonder what dye you use for your hair and beard; you might let me have some of it." Sniffing and gasping, he embraced me and kissed me on the cheek. "You might give me some of it," he repeated. "Why, you are not forty, are you?"

"Alas, I am forty-six!" I said, laughing.

Ivan Ivanitch smelt of tallow candles and cooking, and that suited him. His big, puffy, slow-moving body was swathed in a long frock-coat like a coachman's full coat, with a high waist, and with hooks and eyes instead of buttons, and it would have been strange if he had smelt of eau-de-Cologne, for instance. In his long, unshaven, bluish double chin, which looked like a thistle, his goggle eyes, his shortness of breath, and in the whole of his clumsy, slovenly figure, in his voice, his laugh, and his words, it was difficult to recognize the graceful, interesting talker who used in old days to make the husbands of the district jealous on account of their wives.

"I am in great need of your assistance, my friend," I said, when we were sitting in the dining-room, drinking tea. "I want to organize relief for the

starving peasants, and I don't know how to set about it. So perhaps you will be so kind as to advise me."

"Yes, yes, yes," said Ivan Ivanitch, sighing. "To be sure, to be sure, to be sure..."

"I would not have worried you, my dear fellow, but really there is no one here but you I can appeal to. You know what people are like about here."

"To be sure, to be sure, to be sure... Yes."

I thought that as we were going to have a serious, business consultation in which any one might take part, regardless of their position or personal relations, why should I not invite Natalya Gavrilovna.

"*Tres faciunt collegium*," I said gaily. "What if we were to ask Natalya Gavrilovna? What do you think? Fenya," I said, turning to the maid, "ask Natalya Gavrilovna to come upstairs to us, if possible at once. Tell her it's a very important matter."

A little later Natalya Gavrilovna came in. I got up to meet her and said:

"Excuse us for troubling you, Natalie. We are discussing a very important matter, and we had the happy thought that we might take advantage of your good advice, which you will not refuse to give us. Please sit down."

Ivan Ivanitch kissed her hand while she kissed his forehead; then, when we all sat down to the table, he, looking at her tearfully and blissfully, craned forward to her and kissed her hand again. She was dressed in black, her hair was carefully arranged, and she smelt of fresh scent. She had evidently dressed to go out or was expecting somebody. Coming into the dining-room, she held out her hand to me with simple friendliness, and smiled to me as graciously as she did to Ivan Ivanitch-that pleased me; but as she talked she moved her fingers, often and abruptly leaned back in her chair and talked rapidly, and this jerkiness in her words and movements irritated me and reminded me of her native town-Odessa, where the society, men and women alike, had wearied me by its bad taste.

"I want to do something for the famine-stricken peasants," I began, and after a brief pause I went on: "Money, of course, is a great thing, but to confine oneself to subscribing money, and with that to be satisfied, would be evading the worst of the trouble. Help must take the form of money, but the most important thing is a proper and sound organization. Let us think it over, my friends, and do something."

Natalya Gavrilovna looked at me inquiringly and shrugged her shoulders as though to say, "What do I know about it?"

“Yes, yes, famine...” muttered Ivan Ivanitch. “Certainly... yes.”

“It’s a serious position,” I said, “and assistance is needed as soon as possible. I imagine the first point among the principles which we must work out ought to be promptitude. We must act on the military principles of judgment, promptitude, and energy.”

“Yes, promptitude...” repeated Ivan Ivanitch in a drowsy and listless voice, as though he were dropping asleep. “Only one can’t do anything. The crops have failed, and so what’s the use of all your judgment and energy?... It’s the elements... You can’t go against God and fate.”

“Yes, but that’s what man has a head for, to contend against the elements.”

“Eh? Yes... that’s so, to be sure... Yes.”

Ivan Ivanitch sneezed into his handkerchief, brightened up, and as though he had just woken up, looked round at my wife and me.

“My crops have failed, too.” He laughed a thin little laugh and gave a sly wink as though this were really funny. “No money, no corn, and a yard full of labourers like Count Sheremetyev’s. I want to kick them out, but I haven’t the heart to.”

Natalya Gavrilovna laughed, and began questioning him about his private affairs. Her presence gave me a pleasure such as I had not felt for a long time, and I was afraid to look at her for fear my eyes would betray my secret feeling. Our relations were such that that feeling might seem surprising and ridiculous.

She laughed and talked with Ivan Ivanitch without being in the least disturbed that she was in my room and that I was not laughing.

“And so, my friends, what are we to do?” I asked after waiting for a pause. “I suppose before we do anything else we had better immediately open a subscription-list. We will write to our friends in the capitals and in Odessa, Natalie, and ask them to subscribe. When we have got together a little sum we will begin buying corn and fodder for the cattle; and you, Ivan Ivanitch, will you be so kind as to undertake distributing the relief? Entirely relying on your characteristic tact and efficiency, we will only venture to express a desire that before you give any relief you make acquaintance with the details of the case on the spot, and also, which is very important, you should be careful that corn should be distributed only to those who are in genuine need, and not to the drunken, the idle, or the dishonest.”

“Yes, yes, yes...” muttered Ivan Ivanitch. “To be sure, to be sure.”

“Well, one won’t get much done with that slobbering wreck,” I thought, and I felt irritated.

“I am sick of these famine-stricken peasants, bother them! It’s nothing but grievances with them!” Ivan Ivanitch went on, sucking the rind of the lemon. “The hungry have a grievance against those who have enough, and those who have enough have a grievance against the hungry. Yes... hunger stupefies and maddens a man and makes him savage; hunger is not a potato. When a man is starving he uses bad language, and steals, and may do worse... One must realize that.”

Ivan Ivanitch choked over his tea, coughed, and shook all over with a squeaky, smothered laughter.

“‘There was a battle at Pol... Poltava,’” he brought out, gesticulating with both hands in protest against the laughter and coughing which prevented him from speaking. “‘There was a battle at Poltava!’ When three years after the Emancipation we had famine in two districts here, Fyodor Fyodoritch came and invited me to go to him. ‘Come along, come along,’ he persisted, and nothing else would satisfy him. ‘Very well, let us go,’ I said. And, so we set off. It was in the evening; there was snow falling. Towards night we were getting near his place, and suddenly from the wood came ‘bang!’ and another time ‘bang!’ ‘Oh, damn it all!’... I jumped out of the sledge, and I saw in the darkness a man running up to me, knee-deep in the snow. I put my arm round his shoulder, like this, and knocked the gun out of his hand. Then another one turned up; I fetched him a knock on the back of his head so that he grunted and flopped with his nose in the snow. I was a sturdy chap then, my fist was heavy; I disposed of two of them, and when I turned round Fyodor was sitting astride of a third. We did not let our three fine fellows go; we tied their hands behind their backs so that they might not do us or themselves any harm, and took the fools into the kitchen. We were angry with them and at the same time ashamed to look at them; they were peasants we knew, and were good fellows; we were sorry for them. They were quite stupid with terror. One was crying and begging our pardon, the second looked like a wild beast and kept swearing, the third knelt down and began to pray. I said to Fedya: ‘Don’t bear them a grudge; let them go, the rascals!’ He fed them, gave them a bushel of flour each, and let them go: ‘Get along with you,’ he said. So that’s what he did... The Kingdom of Heaven be his and everlasting peace! He understood and did not bear them a grudge; but there were some who did, and how many people they ruined! Yes... Why, over the affair at the Klotchkovs’ tavern

eleven men were sent to the disciplinary battalion. Yes... And now, look, it's the same thing. Anisyyin, the investigating magistrate, stayed the night with me last Thursday, and he told me about some landowner... Yes... They took the wall of his barn to pieces at night and carried off twenty sacks of rye. When the gentleman heard that such a crime had been committed, he sent a telegram to the Governor and another to the police captain, another to the investigating magistrate!... Of course, every one is afraid of a man who is fond of litigation. The authorities were in a flutter and there was a general hubbub. Two villages were searched."

"Excuse me, Ivan Ivanitch," I said. "Twenty sacks of rye were stolen from me, and it was I who telegraphed to the Governor. I telegraphed to Petersburg, too. But it was by no means out of love for litigation, as you are pleased to express it, and not because I bore them a grudge. I look at every subject from the point of view of principle. From the point of view of the law, theft is the same whether a man is hungry or not."

"Yes, yes..." muttered Ivan Ivanitch in confusion. "Of course... To be sure, yes."

Natalya Gavrilovna blushed.

"There are people..." she said and stopped; she made an effort to seem indifferent, but she could not keep it up, and looked into my eyes with the hatred that I know so well. "There are people," she said, "for whom famine and human suffering exist simply that they may vent their hateful and despicable temperaments upon them."

I was confused and shrugged my shoulders.

"I meant to say generally," she went on, "that there are people who are quite indifferent and completely devoid of all feeling of sympathy, yet who do not pass human suffering by, but insist on meddling for fear people should be able to do without them. Nothing is sacred for their vanity."

"There are people," I said softly, "who have an angelic character, but who express their glorious ideas in such a form that it is difficult to distinguish the angel from an Odessa market-woman."

I must confess it was not happily expressed.

My wife looked at me as though it cost her a great effort to hold her tongue. Her sudden outburst, and then her inappropriate eloquence on the subject of my desire to help the famine-stricken peasants, were, to say the least, out of place; when I had invited her to come upstairs I had expected quite a different attitude to me and my intentions. I cannot say definitely what

I had expected, but I had been agreeably agitated by the expectation. Now I saw that to go on speaking about the famine would be difficult and perhaps stupid.

“Yes...” Ivan Ivanitch muttered inappropriately. “Burov, the merchant, must have four hundred thousand at least. I said to him: ‘Hand over one or two thousand to the famine. You can’t take it with you when you die, anyway.’ He was offended. But we all have to die, you know. Death is not a potato.”

A silence followed again.

“So there’s nothing left for me but to reconcile myself to loneliness,” I sighed. “One cannot fight single-handed. Well, I will try single-handed. Let us hope that my campaign against the famine will be more successful than my campaign against indifference.”

“I am expected downstairs,” said Natalya Gavrilovna.

She got up from the table and turned to Ivan Ivanitch.

“So you will look in upon me downstairs for a minute? I won’t say goodbye to you.”

And she went away.

Ivan Ivanitch was now drinking his seventh glass of tea, choking, smacking his lips, and sucking sometimes his moustache, sometimes the lemon. He was muttering something drowsily and listlessly, and I did not listen but waited for him to go. At last, with an expression that suggested that he had only come to me to take a cup of tea, he got up and began to take leave. As I saw him out I said:

“And so you have given me no advice.”

“Eh? I am a feeble, stupid old man,” he answered. “What use would my advice be? You shouldn’t worry yourself... I really don’t know why you worry yourself. Don’t disturb yourself, my dear fellow! Upon my word, there’s no need,” he whispered genuinely and affectionately, soothing me as though I were a child. “Upon my word, there’s no need.”

“No need? Why, the peasants are pulling the thatch off their huts, and they say there is typhus somewhere already.”

“Well, what of it? If there are good crops next year, they’ll thatch them again, and if we die of typhus others will live after us. Anyway, we have to die-if not now, later. Don’t worry yourself, my dear.”

“I can’t help worrying myself,” I said irritably.

We were standing in the dimly lighted vestibule. Ivan Ivanitch suddenly

took me by the elbow, and, preparing to say something evidently very important, looked at me in silence for a couple of minutes.

“Pavel Andreitch!” he said softly, and suddenly in his puffy, set face and dark eyes there was a gleam of the expression for which he had once been famous and which was truly charming. “Pavel Andreitch, I speak to you as a friend: try to be different! One is ill at ease with you, my dear fellow, one really is!”

He looked intently into my face; the charming expression faded away, his eyes grew dim again, and he sniffed and muttered feebly:

“Yes, yes... Excuse an old man... It’s all nonsense... yes.”

As he slowly descended the staircase, spreading out his hands to balance himself and showing me his huge, bulky back and red neck, he gave me the unpleasant impression of a sort of crab.

“You ought to go away, your Excellency,” he muttered. “To Petersburg or abroad... Why should you live here and waste your golden days? You are young, wealthy, and healthy... Yes... Ah, if I were younger I would whisk away like a hare, and snap my fingers at everything.”

III

My wife's outburst reminded me of our married life together. In old days after every such outburst we felt irresistibly drawn to each other; we would meet and let off all the dynamite that had accumulated in our souls. And now after Ivan Ivanitch had gone away I had a strong impulse to go to my wife. I wanted to go downstairs and tell her that her behaviour at tea had been an insult to me, that she was cruel, petty, and that her plebeian mind had never risen to a comprehension of what *I* was saying and of what *I* was doing. I walked about the rooms a long time thinking of what I would say to her and trying to guess what she would say to me.

That evening, after Ivan Ivanitch went away, I felt in a peculiarly irritating form the uneasiness which had worried me of late. I could not sit down or sit still, but kept walking about in the rooms that were lighted up and keeping near to the one in which Marya Gerasimovna was sitting. I had a feeling very much like that which I had on the North Sea during a storm when every one thought that our ship, which had no freight nor ballast, would overturn. And that evening I understood that my uneasiness was not disappointment, as I had supposed, but a different feeling, though what exactly I could not say, and that irritated me more than ever.

"I will go to her," I decided. "I can think of a pretext. I shall say that I want to see Ivan Ivanitch; that will be all."

I went downstairs and walked without haste over the carpeted floor through the vestibule and the hall. Ivan Ivanitch was sitting on the sofa in the drawing-room; he was drinking tea again and muttering something. My wife was standing opposite to him and holding on to the back of a chair. There was a gentle, sweet, and docile expression on her face, such as one sees on the faces of people listening to crazy saints or holy men when a peculiar hidden significance is imagined in their vague words and mutterings. There was something morbid, something of a nun's exaltation, in my wife's expression and attitude; and her low-pitched, half-dark rooms with their old-fashioned furniture, with her birds asleep in their cages, and with a smell of geranium, reminded me of the rooms of some abbess or pious old lady.

I went into the drawing-room. My wife showed neither surprise nor confusion, and looked at me calmly and serenely, as though she had known I should come.

"I beg your pardon," I said softly. "I am so glad you have not gone yet, Ivan Ivanitch. I forgot to ask you, do you know the Christian name of the president of our Zemstvo?"

"Andrey Stanislavovitch. Yes..."

"*Merci*," I said, took out my notebook, and wrote it down.

There followed a silence during which my wife and Ivan Ivanitch were probably waiting for me to go; my wife did not believe that I wanted to know the president's name-I saw that from her eyes.

"Well, I must be going, my beauty," muttered Ivan Ivanitch, after I had walked once or twice across the drawing-room and sat down by the fireplace.

"No," said Natalya Gavrilovna quickly, touching his hand. "Stay another quarter of an hour... Please do!"

Evidently she did not wish to be left alone with me without a witness.

"Oh, well, I'll wait a quarter of an hour, too," I thought.

"Why, it's snowing!" I said, getting up and looking out of window. "A good fall of snow! Ivan Ivanitch"-I went on walking about the room-"I do regret not being a sportsman. I can imagine what a pleasure it must be coursing hares or hunting wolves in snow like this!"

My wife, standing still, watched my movements, looking out of the corner of her eyes without turning her head. She looked as though she thought I had a sharp knife or a revolver in my pocket.

"Ivan Ivanitch, do take me out hunting some day," I went on softly. "I shall be very, very grateful to you."

At that moment a visitor came into the room. He was a tall, thick-set gentleman whom I did not know, with a bald head, a big fair beard, and little eyes. From his baggy, crumpled clothes and his manners I took him to be a parish clerk or a teacher, but my wife introduced him to me as Dr. Sobol.

"Very, very glad to make your acquaintance," said the doctor in a loud tenor voice, shaking hands with me warmly, with a naive smile. "Very glad!"

He sat down at the table, took a glass of tea, and said in a loud voice:

"Do you happen to have a drop of rum or brandy? Have pity on me, Olya, and look in the cupboard; I am frozen," he said, addressing the maid.

I sat down by the fire again, looked on, listened, and from time to time put in a word in the general conversation. My wife smiled graciously to the visitors and kept a sharp lookout on me, as though I were a wild beast. She was oppressed by my presence, and this aroused in me jealousy, annoyance, and an obstinate desire to wound her. "Wife, these snug rooms, the place by

the fire," I thought, "are mine, have been mine for years, but some crazy Ivan Ivanitch or Sobol has for some reason more right to them than I. Now I see my wife, not out of window, but close at hand, in ordinary home surroundings that I feel the want of now I am growing older, and, in spite of her hatred for me, I miss her as years ago in my childhood I used to miss my mother and my nurse. And I feel that now, on the verge of old age, my love for her is purer and loftier than it was in the past; and that is why I want to go up to her, to stamp hard on her toe with my heel, to hurt her and smile as I do it."

"Monsieur Marten," I said, addressing the doctor, "how many hospitals have we in the district?"

"Sobol," my wife corrected.

"Two," answered Sobol.

"And how many deaths are there every year in each hospital?"

"Pavel Andreitch, I want to speak to you," said my wife.

She apologized to the visitors and went to the next room. I got up and followed her.

"You will go upstairs to your own rooms this minute," she said.

"You are ill-bred," I said to her.

"You will go upstairs to your own rooms this very minute," she repeated sharply, and she looked into my face with hatred.

She was standing so near that if I had stooped a little my beard would have touched her face.

"What is the matter?" I asked. "What harm have I done all at once?"

Her chin quivered, she hastily wiped her eyes, and, with a cursory glance at the looking-glass, whispered:

"The old story is beginning all over again. Of course you won't go away. Well, do as you like. I'll go away myself, and you stay."

We returned to the drawing-room, she with a resolute face, while I shrugged my shoulders and tried to smile. There were some more visitors-an elderly lady and a young man in spectacles. Without greeting the new arrivals or taking leave of the others, I went off to my own rooms.

After what had happened at tea and then again downstairs, it became clear to me that our "family happiness," which we had begun to forget about in the course of the last two years, was through some absurd and trivial reason beginning all over again, and that neither I nor my wife could now stop ourselves; and that next day or the day after, the outburst of hatred would, as

I knew by experience of past years, be followed by something revolting which would upset the whole order of our lives. "So it seems that during these two years we have grown no wiser, colder, or calmer," I thought as I began walking about the rooms. "So there will again be tears, outcries, curses, packing up, going abroad, then the continual sickly fear that she will disgrace me with some coxcomb out there, Italian or Russian, refusing a passport, letters, utter loneliness, missing her, and in five years old age, grey hairs." I walked about, imagining what was really impossible-her, grown handsomer, stouter, embracing a man I did not know. By now convinced that that would certainly happen, "Why," I asked myself, "Why, in one of our long past quarrels, had not I given her a divorce, or why had she not at that time left me altogether? I should not have had this yearning for her now, this hatred, this anxiety; and I should have lived out my life quietly, working and not worrying about anything."

A carriage with two lamps drove into the yard, then a big sledge with three horses. My wife was evidently having a party.

Till midnight everything was quiet downstairs and I heard nothing, but at midnight there was a sound of moving chairs and a clatter of crockery. So there was supper. Then the chairs moved again, and through the floor I heard a noise; they seemed to be shouting hurrah. Marya Gerasimovna was already asleep and I was quite alone in the whole upper storey; the portraits of my forefathers, cruel, insignificant people, looked at me from the walls of the drawing-room, and the reflection of my lamp in the window winked unpleasantly. And with a feeling of jealousy and envy for what was going on downstairs, I listened and thought: "I am master here; if I like, I can in a moment turn out all that fine crew." But I knew that all that was nonsense, that I could not turn out any one, and the word "master" had no meaning. One may think oneself master, married, rich, a kammer-junker, as much as one likes, and at the same time not know what it means.

After supper some one downstairs began singing in a tenor voice.

"Why, nothing special has happened," I tried to persuade myself. "Why am I so upset? I won't go downstairs tomorrow, that's all; and that will be the end of our quarrel."

At a quarter past one I went to bed.

"Have the visitors downstairs gone?" I asked Alexey as he was undressing me.

"Yes, sir, they've gone."

“And why were they shouting hurrah?”

“Alexey Dmitritch Mahonov subscribed for the famine fund a thousand bushels of flour and a thousand roubles. And the old lady-I don’t know her name-promised to set up a soup kitchen on her estate to feed a hundred and fifty people. Thank God... Natalya Gavrilovna has been pleased to arrange that all the gentry should assemble every Friday.”

“To assemble here, downstairs?”

“Yes, sir. Before supper they read a list: since August up to today Natalya Gavrilovna has collected eight thousand roubles, besides corn. Thank God... What I think is that if our mistress does take trouble for the salvation of her soul, she will soon collect a lot. There are plenty of rich people here.”

Dismissing Alexey, I put out the light and drew the bedclothes over my head.

“After all, why am I so troubled?” I thought. “What force draws me to the starving peasants like a butterfly to a flame? I don’t know them, I don’t understand them; I have never seen them and I don’t like them. Why this uneasiness?”

I suddenly crossed myself under the quilt.

“But what a woman she is!” I said to myself, thinking of my wife. “There’s a regular committee held in the house without my knowing. Why this secrecy? Why this conspiracy? What have I done to them? Ivan Ivanitch is right-I must go away.”

Next morning I woke up firmly resolved to go away. The events of the previous day-the conversation at tea, my wife, Sobol, the supper, my apprehensions-worried me, and I felt glad to think of getting away from the surroundings which reminded me of all that. While I was drinking my coffee the bailiff gave me a long report on various matters. The most agreeable item he saved for the last.

“The thieves who stole our rye have been found,” he announced with a smile. “The magistrate arrested three peasants at Pestrovo yesterday.”

“Go away!” I shouted at him; and a propos of nothing, I picked up the cake-basket and flung it on the floor.

IV

After lunch I rubbed my hands, and thought I must go to my wife and tell her that I was going away. Why? Who cared? Nobody cares, I answered, but why shouldn't I tell her, especially as it would give her nothing but pleasure? Besides, to go away after our yesterday's quarrel without saying a word would not be quite tactful: she might think that I was frightened of her, and perhaps the thought that she has driven me out of my house may weigh upon her. It would be just as well, too, to tell her that I subscribe five thousand, and to give her some advice about the organization, and to warn her that her inexperience in such a complicated and responsible matter might lead to most lamentable results. In short, I wanted to see my wife, and while I thought of various pretexts for going to her, I had a firm conviction in my heart that I should do so.

It was still light when I went in to her, and the lamps had not yet been lighted. She was sitting in her study, which led from the drawing-room to her bedroom, and, bending low over the table, was writing something quickly. Seeing me, she started, got up from the table, and remained standing in an attitude such as to screen her papers from me.

"I beg your pardon, I have only come for a minute," I said, and, I don't know why, I was overcome with embarrassment. "I have learnt by chance that you are organizing relief for the famine, Natalie."

"Yes, I am. But that's my business," she answered.

"Yes, it is your business," I said softly. "I am glad of it, for it just fits in with my intentions. I beg your permission to take part in it."

"Forgive me, I cannot let you do it," she said in response, and looked away.

"Why not, Natalie?" I said quietly. "Why not? I, too, am well fed and I, too, want to help the hungry."

"I don't know what it has to do with you," she said with a contemptuous smile, shrugging her shoulders. "Nobody asks you."

"Nobody asks you, either, and yet you have got up a regular committee in *my* house," I said.

"I am asked, but you can have my word for it no one will ever ask you. Go and help where you are not known."

"For God's sake, don't talk to me in that tone." I tried to be mild, and

besought myself most earnestly not to lose my temper. For the first few minutes I felt glad to be with my wife. I felt an atmosphere of youth, of home, of feminine softness, of the most refined elegance-exactly what was lacking on my floor and in my life altogether. My wife was wearing a pink flannel dressing-gown; it made her look much younger, and gave a softness to her rapid and sometimes abrupt movements. Her beautiful dark hair, the mere sight of which at one time stirred me to passion, had from sitting so long with her head bent come loose from the comb and was untidy, but, to my eyes, that only made it look more rich and luxuriant. All this, though is banal to the point of vulgarity. Before me stood an ordinary woman, perhaps neither beautiful nor elegant, but this was my wife with whom I had once lived, and with whom I should have been living to this day if it had not been for her unfortunate character; she was the one human being on the terrestrial globe whom I loved. At this moment, just before going away, when I knew that I should no longer see her even through the window, she seemed to me fascinating even as she was, cold and forbidding, answering me with a proud and contemptuous mockery. I was proud of her, and confessed to myself that to go away from her was terrible and impossible.

"Pavel Andreitch," she said after a brief silence, "for two years we have not interfered with each other but have lived quietly. Why do you suddenly feel it necessary to go back to the past? Yesterday you came to insult and humiliate me," she went on, raising her voice, and her face flushed and her eyes flamed with hatred; "but restrain yourself; do not do it, Pavel Andreitch! Tomorrow I will send in a petition and they will give me a passport, and I will go away; I will go! I will go! I'll go into a convent, into a widows' home, into an almshouse..."

"Into a lunatic asylum!" I cried, not able to restrain myself.

"Well, even into a lunatic asylum! That would be better, that would be better," she cried, with flashing eyes. "When I was in Pestrovo today I envied the sick and starving peasant women because they are not living with a man like you. They are free and honest, while, thanks to you, I am a parasite, I am perishing in idleness, I eat your bread, I spend your money, and I repay you with my liberty and a fidelity which is of no use to any one. Because you won't give me a passport, I must respect your good name, though it doesn't exist."

I had to keep silent. Clenching my teeth, I walked quickly into the drawing-room, but turned back at once and said:

“I beg you earnestly that there should be no more assemblies, plots, and meetings of conspirators in my house! I only admit to my house those with whom I am acquainted, and let all your crew find another place to do it if they want to take up philanthropy. I can’t allow people at midnight in my house to be shouting hurrah at successfully exploiting an hysterical woman like you!”

My wife, pale and wringing her hands, took a rapid stride across the room, uttering a prolonged moan as though she had toothache. With a wave of my hand, I went into the drawing-room. I was choking with rage, and at the same time I was trembling with terror that I might not restrain myself, and that I might say or do something which I might regret all my life. And I clenched my hands tight, hoping to hold myself in.

After drinking some water and recovering my calm a little, I went back to my wife. She was standing in the same attitude as before, as though barring my approach to the table with the papers. Tears were slowly trickling down her pale, cold face. I paused then and said to her bitterly but without anger:

“How you misunderstand me! How unjust you are to me! I swear upon my honour I came to you with the best of motives, with nothing but the desire to do good!”

“Pavel Andreitch!” she said, clasping her hands on her bosom, and her face took on the agonized, imploring expression with which frightened, weeping children beg not to be punished, “I know perfectly well that you will refuse me, but still I beg you. Force yourself to do one kind action in your life. I entreat you, go away from here! That’s the only thing you can do for the starving peasants. Go away, and I will forgive you everything, everything!”

“There is no need for you to insult me, Natalie,” I sighed, feeling a sudden rush of humility. “I had already made up my mind to go away, but I won’t go until I have done something for the peasants. It’s my duty!”

“Ach!” she said softly with an impatient frown. “You can make an excellent bridge or railway, but you can do nothing for the starving peasants. Do understand!”

“Indeed? Yesterday you reproached me with indifference and with being devoid of the feeling of compassion. How well you know me!” I laughed. “You believe in God—well, God is my witness that I am worried day and night...”

“I see that you are worried, but the famine and compassion have nothing

to do with it. You are worried because the starving peasants can get on without you, and because the Zemstvo, and in fact every one who is helping them, does not need your guidance.”

I was silent, trying to suppress my irritation. Then I said:

“I came to speak to you on business. Sit down. Please sit down.”

She did not sit down.

“I beg you to sit down,” I repeated, and I motioned her to a chair.

She sat down. I sat down, too, thought a little, and said:

“I beg you to consider earnestly what I am saying. Listen... Moved by love for your fellow-creatures, you have undertaken the organization of famine relief. I have nothing against that, of course; I am completely in sympathy with you, and am prepared to co-operate with you in every way, whatever our relations may be. But, with all my respect for your mind and your heart... and your heart,” I repeated, “I cannot allow such a difficult, complex, and responsible matter as the organization of relief to be left in your hands entirely. You are a woman, you are inexperienced, you know nothing of life, you are too confiding and expansive. You have surrounded yourself with assistants whom you know nothing about. I am not exaggerating if I say that under these conditions your work will inevitably lead to two deplorable consequences. To begin with, our district will be left unrelieved; and, secondly, you will have to pay for your mistakes and those of your assistants, not only with your purse, but with your reputation. The money deficit and other losses I could, no doubt, make good, but who could restore you your good name? When through lack of proper supervision and oversight there is a rumour that you, and consequently I, have made two hundred thousand over the famine fund, will your assistants come to your aid?”

She said nothing.

“Not from vanity, as you say,” I went on, “but simply that the starving peasants may not be left unrelieved and your reputation may not be injured, I feel it my moral duty to take part in your work.”

“Speak more briefly,” said my wife.

“You will be so kind,” I went on, “as to show me what has been subscribed so far and what you have spent. Then inform me daily of every fresh subscription in money or kind, and of every fresh outlay. You will also give me, Natalie, the list of your helpers. Perhaps they are quite decent people; I don’t doubt it; but, still, it is absolutely necessary to make inquiries.”

She was silent. I got up, and walked up and down the room.

"Let us set to work, then," I said, and I sat down to her table.

"Are you in earnest?" she asked, looking at me in alarm and bewilderment.

"Natalie, do be reasonable!" I said appealingly, seeing from her face that she meant to protest. "I beg you, trust my experience and my sense of honour."

"I don't understand what you want."

"Show me how much you have collected and how much you have spent."

"I have no secrets. Any one may see. Look."

On the table lay five or six school exercise books, several sheets of notepaper covered with writing, a map of the district, and a number of pieces of paper of different sizes. It was getting dusk. I lighted a candle.

"Excuse me, I don't see anything yet," I said, turning over the leaves of the exercise books. "Where is the account of the receipt of money subscriptions?"

"That can be seen from the subscription lists."

"Yes, but you must have an account," I said, smiling at her naivete. "Where are the letters accompanying the subscriptions in money or in kind? *Pardon*, a little practical advice, Natalie: it's absolutely necessary to keep those letters. You ought to number each letter and make a special note of it in a special record. You ought to do the same with your own letters. But I will do all that myself."

"Do so, do so..." she said.

I was very much pleased with myself. Attracted by this living interesting work, by the little table, the naive exercise books and the charm of doing this work in my wife's society, I was afraid that my wife would suddenly hinder me and upset everything by some sudden whim, and so I was in haste and made an effort to attach no consequence to the fact that her lips were quivering, and that she was looking about her with a helpless and frightened air like a wild creature in a trap.

"I tell you what, Natalie," I said without looking at her; "let me take all these papers and exercise books upstairs to my study. There I will look through them and tell you what I think about it tomorrow. Have you any more papers?" I asked, arranging the exercise books and sheets of papers in piles.

"Take them, take them all!" said my wife, helping me to arrange them,

and big tears ran down her cheeks. "Take it all! That's all that was left me in life... Take the last."

"Ach! Natalie, Natalie!" I sighed reproachfully.

She opened the drawer in the table and began flinging the papers out of it on the table at random, poking me in the chest with her elbow and brushing my face with her hair; as she did so, copper coins kept dropping upon my knees and on the floor.

"Take everything!" she said in a husky voice.

When she had thrown out the papers she walked away from me, and putting both hands to her head, she flung herself on the couch. I picked up the money, put it back in the drawer, and locked it up that the servants might not be led into dishonesty; then I gathered up all the papers and went off with them. As I passed my wife I stopped and, looking at her back and shaking shoulders, I said:

"What a baby you are, Natalie! Fie, fie! Listen, Natalie: when you realize how serious and responsible a business it is you will be the first to thank me. I assure you you will."

In my own room I set to work without haste. The exercise books were not bound, the pages were not numbered. The entries were put in all sorts of handwritings; evidently any one who liked had a hand in managing the books. In the record of the subscriptions in kind there was no note of their money value. But, excuse me, I thought, the rye which is now worth one rouble fifteen kopecks may be worth two roubles fifteen kopecks in two months' time! Was that the way to do things? Then, "Given to A. M. Sobol 32 roubles." When was it given? For what purpose was it given? Where was the receipt? There was nothing to show, and no making anything of it. In case of legal proceedings, these papers would only obscure the case.

"How naive she is!" I thought with surprise. "What a child!"

I felt both vexed and amused.

V

My wife had already collected eight thousand; with my five it would be thirteen thousand. For a start that was very good. The business which had so worried and interested me was at last in my hands; I was doing what the others would not and could not do; I was doing my duty, organizing the relief fund in a practical and business-like way.

Everything seemed to be going in accordance with my desires and intentions; but why did my feeling of uneasiness persist? I spent four hours over my wife's papers, making out their meaning and correcting her mistakes, but instead of feeling soothed, I felt as though some one were standing behind me and rubbing my back with a rough hand. What was it I wanted? The organization of the relief fund had come into trustworthy hands, the hungry would be fed-what more was wanted?

The four hours of this light work for some reason exhausted me, so that I could not sit bending over the table nor write. From below I heard from time to time a smothered moan; it was my wife sobbing. Alexey, invariably meek, sleepy, and sanctimonious, kept coming up to the table to see to the candles, and looked at me somewhat strangely.

"Yes, I must go away," I decided at last, feeling utterly exhausted. "As far as possible from these agreeable impressions! I will set off tomorrow."

I gathered together the papers and exercise books, and went down to my wife. As, feeling quite worn out and shattered, I held the papers and the exercise books to my breast with both hands, and passing through my bedroom saw my trunks, the sound of weeping reached me through the floor.

"Are you a kammer-junker?" a voice whispered in my ear. "That's a very pleasant thing. But yet you are a reptile."

"It's all nonsense, nonsense, nonsense," I muttered as I went downstairs. "Nonsense... and it's nonsense, too, that I am actuated by vanity or a love of display... What rubbish! Am I going to get a decoration for working for the peasants or be made the director of a department? Nonsense, nonsense! And who is there to show off to here in the country?"

I was tired, frightfully tired, and something kept whispering in my ear: "Very pleasant. But, still, you are a reptile." For some reason I remembered a line out of an old poem I knew as a child: "How pleasant it is to be good!"

My wife was lying on the couch in the same attitude, on her face and with

her hands clutching her head. She was crying. A maid was standing beside her with a perplexed and frightened face. I sent the maid away, laid the papers on the table, thought a moment and said:

“Here are all your papers, Natalie. It’s all in order, it’s all capital, and I am very much pleased. I am going away tomorrow.”

She went on crying. I went into the drawing-room and sat there in the dark. My wife’s sobs, her sighs, accused me of something, and to justify myself I remembered the whole of our quarrel, starting from my unhappy idea of inviting my wife to our consultation and ending with the exercise books and these tears. It was an ordinary attack of our conjugal hatred, senseless and unseemly, such as had been frequent during our married life, but what had the starving peasants to do with it? How could it have happened that they had become a bone of contention between us? It was just as though pursuing one another we had accidentally run up to the altar and had carried on a quarrel there.

“Natalie,” I said softly from the drawing-room, “hush, hush!”

To cut short her weeping and make an end of this agonizing state of affairs, I ought to have gone up to my wife and comforted her, caressed her, or apologized; but how could I do it so that she would believe me? How could I persuade the wild duck, living in captivity and hating me, that it was dear to me, and that I felt for its sufferings? I had never known my wife, so I had never known how to talk to her or what to talk about. Her appearance I knew very well and appreciated it as it deserved, but her spiritual, moral world, her mind, her outlook on life, her frequent changes of mood, her eyes full of hatred, her disdain, the scope and variety of her reading which sometimes struck me, or, for instance, the nun-like expression I had seen on her face the day before—all that was unknown and incomprehensible to me. When in my collisions with her I tried to define what sort of a person she was, my psychology went no farther than deciding that she was giddy, impractical, ill-tempered, guided by feminine logic; and it seemed to me that that was quite sufficient. But now that she was crying I had a passionate desire to know more.

The weeping ceased. I went up to my wife. She sat up on the couch, and, with her head propped in both hands, looked fixedly and dreamily at the fire.

“I am going away tomorrow morning,” I said.

She said nothing. I walked across the room, sighed, and said:

“Natalie, when you begged me to go away, you said: ‘I will forgive you

everything, everything'... So you think I have wronged you. I beg you calmly and in brief terms to formulate the wrong I've done you."

"I am worn out. Afterwards, some time..." said my wife.

"How am I to blame?" I went on. "What have I done? Tell me: you are young and beautiful, you want to live, and I am nearly twice your age and hated by you, but is that my fault? I didn't marry you by force. But if you want to live in freedom, go; I'll give you your liberty. You can go and love whom you please... I will give you a divorce."

"That's not what I want," she said. "You know I used to love you and always thought of myself as older than you. That's all nonsense... You are not to blame for being older or for my being younger, or that I might be able to love some one else if I were free; but because you are a difficult person, an egoist, and hate every one."

"Perhaps so. I don't know," I said.

"Please go away. You want to go on at me till the morning, but I warn you I am quite worn out and cannot answer you. You promised me to go to town. I am very grateful; I ask nothing more."

My wife wanted me to go away, but it was not easy for me to do that. I was dispirited and I dreaded the big, cheerless, chill rooms that I was so weary of. Sometimes when I had an ache or a pain as a child, I used to huddle up to my mother or my nurse, and when I hid my face in the warm folds of their dress, it seemed to me as though I were hiding from the pain. And in the same way it seemed to me now that I could only hide from my uneasiness in this little room beside my wife. I sat down and screened away the light from my eyes with my hand... There was a stillness.

"How are you to blame?" my wife said after a long silence, looking at me with red eyes that gleamed with tears. "You are very well educated and very well bred, very honest, just, and high-principled, but in you the effect of all that is that wherever you go you bring suffocation, oppression, something insulting and humiliating to the utmost degree. You have a straightforward way of looking at things, and so you hate the whole world. You hate those who have faith, because faith is an expression of ignorance and lack of culture, and at the same time you hate those who have no faith for having no faith and no ideals; you hate old people for being conservative and behind the times, and young people for free-thinking. The interests of the peasantry and of Russia are dear to you, and so you hate the peasants because you suspect every one of them of being a thief and a robber. You hate every one. You are

just, and always take your stand on your legal rights, and so you are always at law with the peasants and your neighbours. You have had twenty bushels of rye stolen, and your love of order has made you complain of the peasants to the Governor and all the local authorities, and to send a complaint of the local authorities to Petersburg. Legal justice!" said my wife, and she laughed. "On the ground of your legal rights and in the interests of morality, you refuse to give me a passport. Law and morality is such that a self-respecting healthy young woman has to spend her life in idleness, in depression, and in continual apprehension, and to receive in return board and lodging from a man she does not love. You have a thorough knowledge of the law, you are very honest and just, you respect marriage and family life, and the effect of all that is that all your life you have not done one kind action, that every one hates you, that you are on bad terms with every one, and the seven years that you have been married you've only lived seven months with your wife. You've had no wife and I've had no husband. To live with a man like you is impossible; there is no way of doing it. In the early years I was frightened with you, and now I am ashamed... That's how my best years have been wasted. When I fought with you I ruined my temper, grew shrewish, coarse, timid, mistrustful... Oh, but what's the use of talking! As though you wanted to understand! Go upstairs, and God be with you!"

My wife lay down on the couch and sank into thought.

"And how splendid, how enviable life might have been!" she said softly, looking reflectively into the fire. "What a life it might have been! There's no bringing it back now."

Any one who has lived in the country in winter and knows those long dreary, still evenings when even the dogs are too bored to bark and even the clocks seem weary of ticking, and any one who on such evenings has been troubled by awakening conscience and has moved restlessly about, trying now to smother his conscience, now to interpret it, will understand the distraction and the pleasure my wife's voice gave me as it sounded in the snug little room, telling me I was a bad man. I did not understand what was wanted of me by my conscience, and my wife, translating it in her feminine way, made clear to me in the meaning of my agitation. As often before in the moments of intense uneasiness, I guessed that the whole secret lay, not in the starving peasants, but in my not being the sort of a man I ought to be.

My wife got up with an effort and came up to me.

"Pavel Andreitch," she said, smiling mournfully, "forgive me, I don't

believe you: you are not going away, but I will ask you one more favour. Call this"-she pointed to her papers-"self-deception, feminine logic, a mistake, as you like; but do not hinder me. It's all that is left me in life." She turned away and paused. "Before this I had nothing. I have wasted my youth in fighting with you. Now I have caught at this and am living; I am happy... It seems to me that I have found in this a means of justifying my existence."

"Natalie, you are a good woman, a woman of ideas," I said, looking at my wife enthusiastically, "and everything you say and do is intelligent and fine."

I walked about the room to conceal my emotion.

"Natalie," I went on a minute later, "before I go away, I beg of you as a special favour, help me to do something for the starving peasants!"

"What can I do?" said my wife, shrugging her shoulders. "Here's the subscription list."

She rummaged among the papers and found the subscription list.

"Subscribe some money," she said, and from her tone I could see that she did not attach great importance to her subscription list; "that is the only way in which you can take part in the work."

I took the list and wrote: "Anonymous, 5,000."

In this "anonymous" there was something wrong, false, conceited, but I only realized that when I noticed that my wife flushed very red and hurriedly thrust the list into the heap of papers. We both felt ashamed; I felt that I must at all costs efface this clumsiness at once, or else I should feel ashamed afterwards, in the train and at Petersburg. But how efface it? What was I to say?

"I fully approve of what you are doing, Natalie," I said genuinely, "and I wish you every success. But allow me at parting to give you one piece of advice, Natalie; be on your guard with Sobol, and with your assistants generally, and don't trust them blindly. I don't say they are not honest, but they are not gentlefolks; they are people with no ideas, no ideals, no faith, with no aim in life, no definite principles, and the whole object of their life is comprised in the rouble. Rouble, rouble, rouble!" I sighed. "They are fond of getting money easily, for nothing, and in that respect the better educated they are the more they are to be dreaded."

My wife went to the couch and lay down.

"Ideas," she brought out, listlessly and reluctantly, "ideas, ideals, objects of life, principles...you always used to use those words when you wanted to insult or humiliate some one, or say something unpleasant. Yes, that's your

way: if with your views and such an attitude to people you are allowed to take part in anything, you would destroy it from the first day. It's time you understand that."

She sighed and paused.

"It's coarseness of character, Pavel Andreitch," she said. "You are well-bred and educated, but what a... Scythian you are in reality! That's because you lead a cramped life full of hatred, see no one, and read nothing but your engineering books. And, you know, there are good people, good books! Yes... but I am exhausted and it wearies me to talk. I ought to be in bed."

"So I am going away, Natalie," I said.

"Yes... yes... *Merci*..."

I stood still for a little while, then went upstairs. An hour later-it was half-past one-I went downstairs again with a candle in my hand to speak to my wife. I didn't know what I was going to say to her, but I felt that I must say some thing very important and necessary. She was not in her study, the door leading to her bedroom was closed.

"Natalie, are you asleep?" I asked softly.

There was no answer.

I stood near the door, sighed, and went into the drawing-room. There I sat down on the sofa, put out the candle, and remained sitting in the dark till the dawn.

VI

I went to the station at ten o'clock in the morning. There was no frost, but snow was falling in big wet flakes and an unpleasant damp wind was blowing.

We passed a pond and then a birch copse, and then began going uphill along the road which I could see from my window. I turned round to take a last look at my house, but I could see nothing for the snow. Soon afterwards dark huts came into sight ahead of us as in a fog. It was Pestrovo.

"If I ever go out of my mind, Pestrovo will be the cause of it," I thought. "It persecutes me."

We came out into the village street. All the roofs were intact, not one of them had been pulled to pieces; so my bailiff had told a lie. A boy was pulling along a little girl and a baby in a sledge. Another boy of three, with his head wrapped up like a peasant woman's and with huge mufflers on his hands, was trying to catch the flying snowflakes on his tongue, and laughing. Then a wagon loaded with fagots came toward us and a peasant walking beside it, and there was no telling whether his beard was white or whether it was covered with snow. He recognized my coachman, smiled at him and said something, and mechanically took off his hat to me. The dogs ran out of the yards and looked inquisitively at my horses. Everything was quiet, ordinary, as usual. The emigrants had returned, there was no bread; in the huts "some were laughing, some were delirious"; but it all looked so ordinary that one could not believe it really was so. There were no distracted faces, no voices whining for help, no weeping, nor abuse, but all around was stillness, order, life, children, sledges, dogs with dishevelled tails. Neither the children nor the peasant we met were troubled; why was I so troubled?

Looking at the smiling peasant, at the boy with the huge mufflers, at the huts, remembering my wife, I realized there was no calamity that could daunt this people; I felt as though there were already a breath of victory in the air. I felt proud and felt ready to cry out that I was with them too; but the horses were carrying us away from the village into the open country, the snow was whirling, the wind was howling, and I was left alone with my thoughts. Of the million people working for the peasantry, life itself had cast me out as a useless, incompetent, bad man. I was a hindrance, a part of the people's calamity; I was vanquished, cast out, and I was hurrying to the station to go

away and hide myself in Petersburg in a hotel in Bolshaya Morskaya.

An hour later we reached the station. The coachman and a porter with a disc on his breast carried my trunks into the ladies' room. My coachman Nikanor, wearing high felt boots and the skirt of his coat tucked up through his belt, all wet with the snow and glad I was going away, gave me a friendly smile and said:

"A fortunate journey, your Excellency. God give you luck."

Every one, by the way, calls me "your Excellency," though I am only a collegiate councillor and a kammer-junker. The porter told me the train had not yet left the next station; I had to wait. I went outside, and with my head heavy from my sleepless night, and so exhausted I could hardly move my legs, I walked aimlessly towards the pump. There was not a soul anywhere near.

"Why am I going?" I kept asking myself. "What is there awaiting me there? The acquaintances from whom I have come away, loneliness, restaurant dinners, noise, the electric light, which makes my eyes ache. Where am I going, and what am I going for? What am I going for?"

And it seemed somehow strange to go away without speaking to my wife. I felt that I was leaving her in uncertainty. Going away, I ought to have told that she was right, that I really was a bad man.

When I turned away from the pump, I saw in the doorway the station-master, of whom I had twice made complaints to his superiors, turning up the collar of his coat, shrinking from the wind and the snow. He came up to me, and putting two fingers to the peak of his cap, told me with an expression of helpless confusion, strained respectfulness, and hatred on his face, that the train was twenty minutes late, and asked me would I not like to wait in the warm?

"Thank you," I answered, "but I am probably not going. Send word to my coachman to wait; I have not made up my mind."

I walked to and fro on the platform and thought, should I go away or not? When the train came in I decided not to go. At home I had to expect my wife's amazement and perhaps her mockery, the dismal upper storey and my uneasiness; but, still, at my age that was easier and as it were more homelike than travelling for two days and nights with strangers to Petersburg, where I should be conscious every minute that my life was of no use to any one or to anything, and that it was approaching its end. No, better at home whatever awaited me there... I went out of the station. It was awkward by daylight to

return home, where every one was so glad at my going. I might spend the rest of the day till evening at some neighbour's, but with whom? With some of them I was on strained relations, others I did not know at all. I considered and thought of Ivan Ivanitch.

"We are going to Bragino!" I said to the coachman, getting into the sledge.

"It's a long way," sighed Nikanor; "it will be twenty miles, or maybe twenty-five."

"Oh, please, my dear fellow," I said in a tone as though Nikanor had the right to refuse. "Please let us go!"

Nikanor shook his head doubtfully and said slowly that we really ought to have put in the shafts, not Circassian, but Peasant or Siskin; and uncertainly, as though expecting I should change my mind, took the reins in his gloves, stood up, thought a moment, and then raised his whip.

"A whole series of inconsistent actions..." I thought, screening my face from the snow. "I must have gone out of my mind. Well, I don't care..."

In one place, on a very high and steep slope, Nikanor carefully held the horses in to the middle of the descent, but in the middle the horses suddenly bolted and dashed downhill at a fearful rate; he raised his elbows and shouted in a wild, frantic voice such as I had never heard from him before:

"Hey! Let's give the general a drive! If you come to grief he'll buy new ones, my darlings! Hey! look out! We'll run you down!"

Only now, when the extraordinary pace we were going at took my breath away, I noticed that he was very drunk. He must have been drinking at the station. At the bottom of the descent there was the crash of ice; a piece of dirty frozen snow thrown up from the road hit me a painful blow in the face.

The runaway horses ran up the hill as rapidly as they had downhill, and before I had time to shout to Nikanor my sledge was flying along on the level in an old pine forest, and the tall pines were stretching out their shaggy white paws to me from all directions.

"I have gone out of my mind, and the coachman's drunk," I thought. "Good!"

I found Ivan Ivanitch at home. He laughed till he coughed, laid his head on my breast, and said what he always did say on meeting me:

"You grow younger and younger. I don't know what dye you use for your hair and your beard; you might give me some of it."

"I've come to return your call, Ivan Ivanitch," I said untruthfully. "Don't

be hard on me; I'm a townsman, conventional; I do keep count of calls."

"I am delighted, my dear fellow. I am an old man; I like respect... Yes."

From his voice and his blissfully smiling face, I could see that he was greatly flattered by my visit. Two peasant women helped me off with my coat in the entry, and a peasant in a red shirt hung it on a hook, and when Ivan Ivanitch and I went into his little study, two barefooted little girls were sitting on the floor looking at a picture-book; when they saw us they jumped up and ran away, and a tall, thin old woman in spectacles came in at once, bowed gravely to me, and picking up a pillow from the sofa and a picture-book from the floor, went away. From the adjoining rooms we heard incessant whispering and the patter of bare feet.

"I am expecting the doctor to dinner," said Ivan Ivanitch. "He promised to come from the relief centre. Yes. He dines with me every Wednesday, God bless him." He craned towards me and kissed me on the neck. "You have come, my dear fellow, so you are not vexed," he whispered, sniffing. "Don't be vexed, my dear creature. Yes. Perhaps it is annoying, but don't be cross. My only prayer to God before I die is to live in peace and harmony with all in the true way. Yes."

"Forgive me, Ivan Ivanitch, I will put my feet on a chair," I said, feeling that I was so exhausted I could not be myself; I sat further back on the sofa and put up my feet on an arm-chair. My face was burning from the snow and the wind, and I felt as though my whole body were basking in the warmth and growing weaker from it.

"It's very nice here," I went on—"warm, soft, snug... and goose-feather pens," I laughed, looking at the writing-table; "sand instead of blotting-paper."

"Eh? Yes... yes... The writing-table and the mahogany cupboard here were made for my father by a self-taught cabinet-maker-Glyeb Butyga, a serf of General Zhukov's. Yes... a great artist in his own way."

Listlessly and in the tone of a man dropping asleep, he began telling me about cabinet-maker Butyga. I listened. Then Ivan Ivanitch went into the next room to show me a polisander wood chest of drawers remarkable for its beauty and cheapness. He tapped the chest with his fingers, then called my attention to a stove of patterned tiles, such as one never sees now. He tapped the stove, too, with his fingers. There was an atmosphere of good-natured simplicity and well-fed abundance about the chest of drawers, the tiled stove, the low chairs, the pictures embroidered in wool and silk on canvas in solid,

ugly frames. When one remembers that all those objects were standing in the same places and precisely in the same order when I was a little child, and used to come here to name-day parties with my mother, it is simply unbelievable that they could ever cease to exist.

I thought what a fearful difference between Butyga and me! Butyga who made things, above all, solidly and substantially, and seeing in that his chief object, gave to length of life peculiar significance, had no thought of death, and probably hardly believed in its possibility; I, when I built my bridges of iron and stone which would last a thousand years, could not keep from me the thought, "It's not for long...it's no use." If in time Butyga's cupboard and my bridge should come under the notice of some sensible historian of art, he would say: "These were two men remarkable in their own way: Butyga loved his fellow-creatures and would not admit the thought that they might die and be annihilated, and so when he made his furniture he had the immortal man in his mind. The engineer Asorin did not love life or his fellow-creatures; even in the happy moments of creation, thoughts of death, of finiteness and dissolution, were not alien to him, and we see how insignificant and finite, how timid and poor, are these lines of his..."

"I only heat these rooms," muttered Ivan Ivanitch, showing me his rooms. "Ever since my wife died and my son was killed in the war, I have kept the best rooms shut up. Yes... see..."

He opened a door, and I saw a big room with four columns, an old piano, and a heap of peas on the floor; it smelt cold and damp.

"The garden seats are in the next room..." muttered Ivan Ivanitch. "There's no one to dance the mazurka now... I've shut them up."

We heard a noise. It was Dr. Sobol arriving. While he was rubbing his cold hands and stroking his wet beard, I had time to notice in the first place that he had a very dull life, and so was pleased to see Ivan Ivanitch and me; and, secondly, that he was a naive and simple-hearted man. He looked at me as though I were very glad to see him and very much interested in him.

"I have not slept for two nights," he said, looking at me naively and stroking his beard. "One night with a confinement, and the next I stayed at a peasant's with the bugs biting me all night. I am as sleepy as Satan, do you know."

With an expression on his face as though it could not afford me anything but pleasure, he took me by the arm and led me to the dining-room. His naive eyes, his crumpled coat, his cheap tie and the smell of iodoform made an

unpleasant impression upon me; I felt as though I were in vulgar company. When we sat down to table he filled my glass with vodka, and, smiling helplessly, I drank it; he put a piece of ham on my plate and I ate it submissively.

“Repetitia est mater studiorum,” said Sobol, hastening to drink off another wineglassful. “Would you believe it, the joy of seeing good people has driven away my sleepiness? I have turned into a peasant, a savage in the wilds; I’ve grown coarse, but I am still an educated man, and I tell you in good earnest, it’s tedious without company.”

They served first for a cold course white sucking-pig with horse-radish cream, then a rich and very hot cabbage soup with pork on it, with boiled buckwheat, from which rose a column of steam. The doctor went on talking, and I was soon convinced that he was a weak, unfortunate man, disorderly in external life. Three glasses of vodka made him drunk; he grew unnaturally lively, ate a great deal, kept clearing his throat and smacking his lips, and already addressed me in Italian, *“Eccellenza.”* Looking naively at me as though he were convinced that I was very glad to see and hear him, he informed me that he had long been separated from his wife and gave her three-quarters of his salary; that she lived in the town with his children, a boy and a girl, whom he adored; that he loved another woman, a widow, well educated, with an estate in the country, but was rarely able to see her, as he was busy with his work from morning till night and had not a free moment.

“The whole day long, first at the hospital, then on my rounds,” he told us; “and I assure you, *Eccellenza*, I have not time to read a book, let alone going to see the woman I love. I’ve read nothing for ten years! For ten years, *Eccellenza*. As for the financial side of the question, ask Ivan Ivanitch: I have often no money to buy tobacco.”

“On the other hand, you have the moral satisfaction of your work,” I said.

“What?” he asked, and he winked. “No,” he said, “better let us drink.”

I listened to the doctor, and, after my invariable habit, tried to take his measure by my usual classification-materialist, idealist, filthy lucre, gregarious instincts, and so on; but no classification fitted him even approximately; and strange to say, while I simply listened and looked at him, he seemed perfectly clear to me as a person, but as soon as I began trying to classify him he became an exceptionally complex, intricate, and incomprehensible character in spite of all his candour and simplicity. “Is that man,” I asked myself, “capable of wasting other people’s money, abusing

their confidence, being disposed to sponge on them?” And now this question, which had once seemed to me grave and important, struck me as crude, petty, and coarse.

Pie was served; then, I remember, with long intervals between, during which we drank home-made liquors, they gave us a stew of pigeons, some dish of giblets, roast sucking-pig, partridges, cauliflower, curd dumplings, curd cheese and milk, jelly, and finally pancakes and jam. At first I ate with great relish, especially the cabbage soup and the buckwheat, but afterwards I munched and swallowed mechanically, smiling helplessly and unconscious of the taste of anything. My face was burning from the hot cabbage soup and the heat of the room. Ivan Ivanitch and Sobol, too, were crimson.

“To the health of your wife,” said Sobol. “She likes me. Tell her her doctor sends her his respects.”

“She’s fortunate, upon my word,” sighed Ivan Ivanitch. “Though she takes no trouble, does not fuss or worry herself, she has become the most important person in the whole district. Almost the whole business is in her hands, and they all gather round her, the doctor, the District Captains, and the ladies. With people of the right sort that happens of itself. Yes... The apple-tree need take no thought for the apple to grow on it; it will grow of itself.”

“It’s only people who don’t care who take no thought,” said I.

“Eh? Yes...” muttered Ivan Ivanitch, not catching what I said, “that’s true... One must not worry oneself. Just so, just so... Only do your duty towards God and your neighbour, and then never mind what happens.”

“Eccellenza,” said Sobol solemnly, “just look at nature about us: if you poke your nose or your ear out of your fur collar it will be frost-bitten; stay in the fields for one hour, you’ll be buried in the snow; while the village is just the same as in the days of Rurik, the same Petchenyegs and Polovtsi. It’s nothing but being burnt down, starving, and struggling against nature in every way. What was I saying? Yes! If one thinks about it, you know, looks into it and analyses all this hotchpotch, if you will allow me to call it so, it’s not life but more like a fire in a theatre! Any one who falls down or screams with terror, or rushes about, is the worst enemy of good order; one must stand up and look sharp, and not stir a hair! There’s no time for whimpering and busying oneself with trifles. When you have to deal with elemental forces you must put out force against them, be firm and as unyielding as a stone. Isn’t that right, grandfather?” He turned to Ivan Ivanitch and laughed. “I am no better than a woman myself; I am a limp rag, a flabby creature, so I hate

flabbiness. I can't endure petty feelings! One mopes, another is frightened, a third will come straight in here and say: 'Fie on you! Here you've guzzled a dozen courses and you talk about the starving!' That's petty and stupid! A fourth will reproach you, Eccellenza, for being rich. Excuse me, Eccellenza," he went on in a loud voice, laying his hand on his heart, "but your having set our magistrate the task of hunting day and night for your thieves-excuse me, that's also petty on your part. I am a little drunk, so that's why I say this now, but you know, it is petty!"

"Who's asking him to worry himself? I don't understand!" I said, getting up.

I suddenly felt unbearably ashamed and mortified, and I walked round the table.

"Who asks him to worry himself? I didn't ask him to... Damn him!"

"They have arrested three men and let them go again. They turned out not to be the right ones, and now they are looking for a fresh lot," said Sobol, laughing. "It's too bad!"

"I did not ask him to worry himself," said I, almost crying with excitement. "What's it all for? What's it all for? Well, supposing I was wrong, supposing I have done wrong, why do they try to put me more in the wrong?"

"Come, come, come, come!" said Sobol, trying to soothe me. "Come! I have had a drop, that is why I said it. My tongue is my enemy. Come," he sighed, "we have eaten and drunk wine, and now for a nap."

He got up from the table, kissed Ivan Ivanitch on the head, and staggering from repletion, went out of the dining-room. Ivan Ivanitch and I smoked in silence.

"I don't sleep after dinner, my dear," said Ivan Ivanitch, "but you have a rest in the lounge-room."

I agreed. In the half-dark and warmly heated room they called the lounge-room, there stood against the walls long, wide sofas, solid and heavy, the work of Butyga the cabinet maker; on them lay high, soft, white beds, probably made by the old woman in spectacles. On one of them Sobol, without his coat and boots, already lay asleep with his face to the back of the sofa; another bed was awaiting me. I took off my coat and boots, and, overcome by fatigue, by the spirit of Butyga which hovered over the quiet lounge-room, and by the light, caressing snore of Sobol, I lay down submissively.

And at once I began dreaming of my wife, of her room, of the station-master with his face full of hatred, the heaps of snow, a fire in the theatre. I dreamed of the peasants who had stolen twenty sacks of rye out of my barn.

"Anyway, it's a good thing the magistrate let them go," I said.

I woke up at the sound of my own voice, looked for a moment in perplexity at Sobol's broad back, at the buckles of his waistcoat, at his thick heels, then lay down again and fell asleep.

When I woke up the second time it was quite dark. Sobol was asleep. There was peace in my heart, and I longed to make haste home. I dressed and went out of the lounge-room. Ivan Ivanitch was sitting in a big arm-chair in his study, absolutely motionless, staring at a fixed point, and it was evident that he had been in the same state of petrification all the while I had been asleep.

"Good!" I said, yawning. "I feel as though I had woken up after breaking the fast at Easter. I shall often come and see you now. Tell me, did my wife ever dine here?"

"So-ome-ti-mes... sometimes," muttered Ivan Ivanitch, making an effort to stir. "She dined here last Saturday. Yes... She likes me."

After a silence I said:

"Do you remember, Ivan Ivanitch, you told me I had a disagreeable character and that it was difficult to get on with me? But what am I to do to make my character different?"

"I don't know, my dear boy... I'm a feeble old man, I can't advise you... Yes... But I said that to you at the time because I am fond of you and fond of your wife, and I was fond of your father... Yes. I shall soon die, and what need have I to conceal things from you or to tell you lies? So I tell you: I am very fond of you, but I don't respect you. No, I don't respect you."

He turned towards me and said in a breathless whisper:

"It's impossible to respect you, my dear fellow. You look like a real man. You have the figure and deportment of the French President Carnot-I saw a portrait of him the other day in an illustrated paper... yes... You use lofty language, and you are clever, and you are high up in the service beyond all reach, but haven't real soul, my dear boy... there's no strength in it."

"A Scythian, in fact," I laughed. "But what about my wife? Tell me something about my wife; you know her better."

I wanted to talk about my wife, but Sobol came in and prevented me.

"I've had a sleep and a wash," he said, looking at me naively. "I'll have a

cup of tea with some rum in it and go home.”

VII

It was by now past seven. Besides Ivan Ivanitch, women servants, the old dame in spectacles, the little girls and the peasant, all accompanied us from the hall out on to the steps, wishing us good-bye and all sorts of blessings, while near the horses in the darkness there were standing and moving about men with lanterns, telling our coachmen how and which way to drive, and wishing us a lucky journey. The horses, the men, and the sledges were white.

"Where do all these people come from?" I asked as my three horses and the doctor's two moved at a walking pace out of the yard.

"They are all his serfs," said Sobol. "The new order has not reached him yet. Some of the old servants are living out their lives with him, and then there are orphans of all sorts who have nowhere to go; there are some, too, who insist on living there, there's no turning them out. A queer old man!"

Again the flying horses, the strange voice of drunken Nikanor, the wind and the persistent snow, which got into one's eyes, one's mouth, and every fold of one's fur coat...

"Well, I am running a rig," I thought, while my bells chimed in with the doctor's, the wind whistled, the coachmen shouted; and while this frantic uproar was going on, I recalled all the details of that strange wild day, unique in my life, and it seemed to me that I really had gone out of my mind or become a different man. It was as though the man I had been till that day were already a stranger to me.

The doctor drove behind and kept talking loudly with his coachman. From time to time he overtook me, drove side by side, and always, with the same naive confidence that it was very pleasant to me, offered me a cigarette or asked for the matches. Or, overtaking me, he would lean right out of his sledge, and waving about the sleeves of his fur coat, which were at least twice as long as his arms, shout:

"Go it, Vaska! Beat the thousand roubles! Hey, my kittens!"

And to the accompaniment of loud, malicious laughter from Sobol and his Vaska the doctor's kittens raced ahead. My Nikanor took it as an affront, and held in his three horses, but when the doctor's bells had passed out of hearing, he raised his elbows, shouted, and our horses flew like mad in pursuit. We drove into a village, there were glimpses of lights, the silhouettes of huts. Some one shouted:

“Ah, the devils!” We seemed to have galloped a mile and a half, and still it was the village street and there seemed no end to it. When we caught up the doctor and drove more quietly, he asked for matches and said:

“Now try and feed that street! And, you know, there are five streets like that, sir. Stay, stay,” he shouted. “Turn in at the tavern! We must get warm and let the horses rest.”

They stopped at the tavern.

“I have more than one village like that in my district,” said the doctor, opening a heavy door with a squeaky block, and ushering me in front of him. “If you look in broad daylight you can’t see to the end of the street, and there are side-streets, too, and one can do nothing but scratch one’s head. It’s hard to do anything.”

We went into the best room where there was a strong smell of tablecloths, and at our entrance a sleepy peasant in a waistcoat and a shirt worn outside his trousers jumped up from a bench. Sobol asked for some beer and I asked for tea.

“It’s hard to do anything,” said Sobol. “Your wife has faith; I respect her and have the greatest reverence for her, but I have no great faith myself. As long as our relations to the people continue to have the character of ordinary philanthropy, as shown in orphan asylums and almshouses, so long we shall only be shuffling, shamming, and deceiving ourselves, and nothing more. Our relations ought to be businesslike, founded on calculation, knowledge, and justice. My Vaska has been working for me all his life; his crops have failed, he is sick and starving. If I give him fifteen kopecks a day, by so doing I try to restore him to his former condition as a workman; that is, I am first and foremost looking after my own interests, and yet for some reason I call that fifteen kopecks relief, charity, good works. Now let us put it like this. On the most modest computation, reckoning seven kopecks a soul and five souls a family, one needs three hundred and fifty roubles a day to feed a thousand families. That sum is fixed by our practical duty to a thousand families. Meanwhile we give not three hundred and fifty a day, but only ten, and say that that is relief, charity, that that makes your wife and all of us exceptionally good people and hurrah for our humaneness. That is it, my dear soul! Ah! if we would talk less of being humane and calculated more, reasoned, and took a conscientious attitude to our duties! How many such humane, sensitive people there are among us who tear about in all good faith with subscription lists, but don’t pay their tailors or their cooks. There is no

logic in our life; that's what it is! No logic!"

We were silent for a while. I was making a mental calculation and said:

"I will feed a thousand families for two hundred days. Come and see me tomorrow to talk it over."

I was pleased that this was said quite simply, and was glad that Sobol answered me still more simply:

"Right."

We paid for what we had and went out of the tavern.

"I like going on like this," said Sobol, getting into the sledge. "Eccellenza, oblige me with a match. I've forgotten mine in the tavern."

A quarter of an hour later his horses fell behind, and the sound of his bells was lost in the roar of the snow-storm. Reaching home, I walked about my rooms, trying to think things over and to define my position clearly to myself; I had not one word, one phrase, ready for my wife. My brain was not working.

But without thinking of anything, I went downstairs to my wife. She was in her room, in the same pink dressing-gown, and standing in the same attitude as though screening her papers from me. On her face was an expression of perplexity and irony, and it was evident that having heard of my arrival, she had prepared herself not to cry, not to entreat me, not to defend herself, as she had done the day before, but to laugh at me, to answer me contemptuously, and to act with decision. Her face was saying: "If that's how it is, good-bye."

"Natalie, I've not gone away," I said, "but it's not deception. I have gone out of my mind; I've grown old, I'm ill, I've become a different man—think as you like... I've shaken off my old self with horror, with horror; I despise him and am ashamed of him, and the new man who has been in me since yesterday will not let me go away. Do not drive me away, Natalie!"

She looked intently into my face and believed me, and there was a gleam of uneasiness in her eyes. Enchanted by her presence, warmed by the warmth of her room, I muttered as in delirium, holding out my hands to her:

"I tell you, I have no one near to me but you. I have never for one minute ceased to miss you, and only obstinate vanity prevented me from owning it. The past, when we lived as husband and wife, cannot be brought back, and there's no need; but make me your servant, take all my property, and give it away to any one you like. I am at peace, Natalie, I am content... I am at peace."

My wife, looking intently and with curiosity into my face, suddenly uttered a faint cry, burst into tears, and ran into the next room. I went upstairs to my own storey.

An hour later I was sitting at my table, writing my “History of Railways,” and the starving peasants did not now hinder me from doing so. Now I feel no uneasiness. Neither the scenes of disorder which I saw when I went the round of the huts at Pestrovo with my wife and Sobol the other day, nor malignant rumours, nor the mistakes of the people around me, nor old age close upon me—nothing disturbs me. Just as the flying bullets do not hinder soldiers from talking of their own affairs, eating and cleaning their boots, so the starving peasants do not hinder me from sleeping quietly and looking after my personal affairs. In my house and far around it there is in full swing the work which Dr. Sobol calls “an orgy of philanthropy.” My wife often comes up to me and looks about my rooms uneasily, as though looking for what more she can give to the starving peasants “to justify her existence,” and I see that, thanks to her, there will soon be nothing of our property left and we shall be poor; but that does not trouble me, and I smile at her gaily. What will happen in the future I don’t know.

A SLANDER

SERGE KAPITONICH AHINEEV, the writing master, was marrying his daughter to the teacher of history and geography. The wedding festivities were going off most successfully. In the drawing room there was singing, playing, and dancing. Waiters hired from the club were flitting distractedly about the rooms, dressed in black swallow-tails and dirty white ties. There was a continual hubbub and din of conversation. Sitting side by side on the sofa, the teacher of mathematics, Tarantulov, the French teacher, Pasdequoi, and the junior assessor of taxes, Mzda, were talking hurriedly and interrupting one another as they described to the guests cases of persons being buried alive, and gave their opinions on spiritualism. None of them believed in spiritualism, but all admitted that there were many things in this world which would always be beyond the mind of man. In the next room the literature master, Dodonsky, was explaining to the visitors the cases in which a sentry has the right to fire on passers-by. The subjects, as you perceive, were alarming, but very agreeable. Persons whose social position precluded them from entering were looking in at the windows from the yard.

Just at midnight the master of the house went into the kitchen to see whether everything was ready for supper. The kitchen from floor to ceiling was filled with fumes composed of goose, duck, and many other odours. On two tables the accessories, the drinks and light refreshments, were set out in artistic disorder. The cook, Marfa, a red-faced woman whose figure was like a barrel with a belt around it, was bustling about the tables.

"Show me the sturgeon, Marfa," said Ahineev, rubbing his hands and licking his lips. "What a perfume! I could eat up the whole kitchen. Come, show me the sturgeon."

Marfa went up to one of the benches and cautiously lifted a piece of greasy newspaper. Under the paper on an immense dish there reposed a huge sturgeon, masked in jelly and decorated with capers, olives, and carrots. Ahineev gazed at the sturgeon and gasped. His face beamed, he turned his eyes up. He bent down and with his lips emitted the sound of an ungreased wheel. After standing a moment he snapped his fingers with delight and once more smacked his lips.

"Ah-ah! the sound of a passionate kiss... Who is it you're kissing out there, little Marfa?" came a voice from the next room, and in the doorway

there appeared the cropped head of the assistant usher, Vankin. "Who is it? A-a-h!... Delighted to meet you! Sergei Kapitonich! You're a fine grandfather, I must say! *Tête-à-tête* with the fair sex-tette!"

"I'm not kissing," said Ahineev in confusion. "Who told you so, you fool? I was only... I smacked my lips... in reference to... as an indication of... pleasure... at the sight of the fish."

"Tell that to the marines!" The intrusive face vanished, wearing a broad grin.

Ahineev flushed.

"Hang it!" he thought, "the beast will go now and talk scandal.

He'll disgrace me to all the town, the brute."

Ahineev went timidly into the drawing-room and looked stealthily round for Vankin. Vankin was standing by the piano, and, bending down with a jaunty air, was whispering something to the inspector's sister-in-law, who was laughing.

"Talking about me!" thought Ahineev. "About me, blast him! And she believes it... believes it! She laughs! Mercy on us! No, I can't let it pass... I can't. I must do something to prevent his being believed... I'll speak to them all, and he'll be shown up for a fool and a gossip."

Ahineev scratched his head, and still overcome with embarrassment, went up to Pasdequoi.

"I've just been in the kitchen to see after the supper," he said to the Frenchman. "I know you are fond of fish, and I've a sturgeon, my dear fellow, beyond everything! A yard and a half long! Ha, ha, ha! And, by the way... I was just forgetting... In the kitchen just now, with that sturgeon... quite a little story! I went into the kitchen just now and wanted to look at the supper dishes. I looked at the sturgeon and I smacked my lips with relish... at the piquancy of it. And at the very moment that fool Vankin came in and said:... 'Ha, ha, ha!... So you're kissing here!' Kissing Marfa, the cook! What a thing to imagine, silly fool! The woman is a perfect fright, like all the beasts put together, and he talks about kissing! Queer fish!"

"Who's a queer fish?" asked Tarantulov, coming up.

"Why he, over there-Vankin! I went into the kitchen..."

And he told the story of Vankin. "... He amused me, queer fish!

I'd rather kiss a dog than Marfa, if you ask me," added Ahineev.

He looked round and saw behind him Mzda.

"We were talking of Vankin," he said. "Queer fish, he is! He went into the

kitchen, saw me beside Marfa, and began inventing all sorts of silly stories. 'Why are you kissing?' he says. He must have had a drop too much. 'And I'd rather kiss a turkeycock than Marfa,' I said, 'And I've a wife of my own, you fool,' said I. He did amuse me!"

"Who amused you?" asked the priest who taught Scripture in the school, going up to Ahineev.

"Vankin. I was standing in the kitchen, you know, looking at the sturgeon..."

And so on. Within half an hour or so all the guests knew the incident of the sturgeon and Vankin.

"Let him tell away now!" thought Ahineev, rubbing his hands. "Let him! He'll begin telling his story and they'll say to him at once, 'Enough of your improbable nonsense, you fool, we know all about it!'"

And Ahineev was so relieved that in his joy he drank four glasses too many. After escorting the young people to their room, he went to bed and slept like an innocent babe, and next day he thought no more of the incident with the sturgeon. But, alas! man proposes, but God disposes. An evil tongue did its evil work, and Ahineev's strategy was of no avail. Just a week later-to be precise, on Wednesday after the third lesson-when Ahineev was standing in the middle of the teacher's room, holding forth on the vicious propensities of a boy called Visekin, the head master went up to him and drew him aside:

"Look here, Sergei Kapitonich," said the head master, "you must excuse me... It's not my business; but all the same I must make you realize... It's my duty. You see, there are rumors that you are romancing with that... cook... It's nothing to do with me, but... flirt with her, kiss her... as you please, but don't let it be so public, please. I entreat you! Don't forget that you're a schoolmaster."

Ahineev turned cold and faint. He went home like a man stung by a whole swarm of bees, like a man scalded with boiling water. As he walked home, it seemed to him that the whole town was looking at him as though he were smeared with pitch. At home fresh trouble awaited him.

"Why aren't you gobbling up your food as usual?" his wife asked him at dinner. "What are you so pensive about? Brooding over your amours? Pining for your Marfa? I know all about it, Mohammedan! Kind friends have opened my eyes! O-o-o!... you savage!"

And she slapped him in the face. He got up from the table, not feeling the earth under his feet, and without his hat or coat, made his way to Vankin. He

found him at home.

"You scoundrel!" he addressed him. "Why have you covered me with mud before all the town? Why did you set this slander going about me?"

"What slander? What are you talking about?"

"Who was it gossiped of my kissing Marfa? Wasn't it you? Tell me that. Wasn't it you, you brigand?"

Vankin blinked and twitched in every fibre of his battered countenance, raised his eyes to the icon and articulated, "God blast me! Strike me blind and lay me out, if I said a single word about you! May I be left without house and home, may I be stricken with worse than cholera!"

Vankin's sincerity did not admit of doubt. It was evidently not he who was the author of the slander.

"But who, then, who?" Ahineev wondered, going over all his acquaintances in his mind and beating himself on the breast. "Who, then?"

Who, then? We, too, ask the reader.

THE HORSE-STEALERS

A HOSPITAL assistant, called Yergunov, an empty-headed fellow, known throughout the district as a great braggart and drunkard, was returning one evening in Christmas week from the hamlet of Ryepino, where he had been to make some purchases for the hospital. That he might get home in good time and not be late, the doctor had lent him his very best horse.

At first it had been a still day, but at eight o'clock a violent snow-storm came on, and when he was only about four miles from home Yergunov completely lost his way.

He did not know how to drive, he did not know the road, and he drove on at random, hoping that the horse would find the way of itself. Two hours passed; the horse was exhausted, he himself was chilled, and already began to fancy that he was not going home, but back towards Ryepino. But at last above the uproar of the storm he heard the far-away barking of a dog, and a murky red blur came into sight ahead of him: little by little, the outlines of a high gate could be discerned, then a long fence on which there were nails with their points uppermost, and beyond the fence there stood the slanting crane of a well. The wind drove away the mist of snow from before the eyes, and where there had been a red blur, there sprang up a small, squat little house with a steep thatched roof. Of the three little windows one, covered on the inside with something red, was lighted up.

What sort of place was it? Yergunov remembered that to the right of the road, three and a half or four miles from the hospital, there was Andrey Tchirikov's tavern. He remembered, too, that this Tchirikov, who had been lately killed by some sledge-drivers, had left a wife and a daughter called Lyubka, who had come to the hospital two years before as a patient. The inn had a bad reputation, and to visit it late in the evening, and especially with someone else's horse, was not free from risk. But there was no help for it. Yergunov fumbled in his knapsack for his revolver, and, coughing sternly, tapped at the window-frame with his whip.

"Hey! who is within?" he cried. "Hey, granny! let me come in and get warm!"

With a hoarse bark a black dog rolled like a ball under the horse's feet, then another white one, then another black one—there must have been a dozen of them. Yergunov looked to see which was the biggest, swung his whip and

lashed at it with all his might. A small, long-legged puppy turned its sharp muzzle upwards and set up a shrill, piercing howl.

Yergunov stood for a long while at the window, tapping. But at last the hoar-frost on the trees near the house glowed red, and a muffled female figure appeared with a lantern in her hands.

"Let me in to get warm, granny," said Yergunov. "I was driving to the hospital, and I have lost my way. It's such weather, God preserve us. Don't be afraid; we are your own people, granny."

"All my own people are at home, and we didn't invite strangers," said the figure grimly. "And what are you knocking for? The gate is not locked."

Yergunov drove into the yard and stopped at the steps.

"Bid your labourer take my horse out, granny," said he.

"I am not granny."

And indeed she was not a granny. While she was putting out the lantern the light fell on her face, and Yergunov saw black eyebrows, and recognized Lyubka.

"There are no labourers about now," she said as she went into the house. "Some are drunk and asleep, and some have been gone to Ryepino since the morning. It's a holiday..."

As he fastened his horse up in the shed, Yergunov heard a neigh, and distinguished in the darkness another horse, and felt on it a Cossack saddle. So there must be someone else in the house besides the woman and her daughter. For greater security Yergunov unsaddled his horse, and when he went into the house, took with him both his purchases and his saddle.

The first room into which he went was large and very hot, and smelt of freshly washed floors. A short, lean peasant of about forty, with a small, fair beard, wearing a dark blue shirt, was sitting at the table under the holy images. It was Kalashnikov, an arrant scoundrel and horse-stealer, whose father and uncle kept a tavern in Bogalyovka, and disposed of the stolen horses where they could. He too had been to the hospital more than once, not for medical treatment, but to see the doctor about horses-to ask whether he had not one for sale, and whether his honour would not like to swop his bay mare for a dun-coloured gelding. Now his head was pomaded and a silver ear-ring glittered in his ear, and altogether he had a holiday air. Frowning and dropping his lower lip, he was looking intently at a big dog's-eared picture-book. Another peasant lay stretched on the floor near the stove; his head, his shoulders, and his chest were covered with a sheepskin-he was probably

asleep; beside his new boots, with shining bits of metal on the heels, there were two dark pools of melted snow.

Seeing the hospital assistant, Kalashnikov greeted him.

"Yes, it is weather," said Yergunov, rubbing his chilled knees with his open hands. "The snow is up to one's neck; I am soaked to the skin, I can tell you. And I believe my revolver is, too..."

He took out his revolver, looked it all over, and put it back in his knapsack. But the revolver made no impression at all; the peasant went on looking at the book.

"Yes, it is weather... I lost my way, and if it had not been for the dogs here, I do believe it would have been my death. There would have been a nice to-do. And where are the women?"

"The old woman has gone to Ryepino, and the girl is getting supper ready..." answered Kalashnikov.

Silence followed. Yergunov, shivering and gasping, breathed on his hands, huddled up, and made a show of being very cold and exhausted. The still angry dogs could be heard howling outside. It was dreary.

"You come from Bogalyovka, don't you?" he asked the peasant sternly.

"Yes, from Bogalyovka."

And to while away the time Yergunov began to think about Bogalyovka. It was a big village and it lay in a deep ravine, so that when one drove along the highroad on a moonlight night, and looked down into the dark ravine and then up at the sky, it seemed as though the moon were hanging over a bottomless abyss and it were the end of the world. The path going down was steep, winding, and so narrow that when one drove down to Bogalyovka on account of some epidemic or to vaccinate the people, one had to shout at the top of one's voice, or whistle all the way, for if one met a cart coming up one could not pass. The peasants of Bogalyovka had the reputation of being good gardeners and horse-stealers. They had well-stocked gardens. In spring the whole village was buried in white cherry-blossom, and in the summer they sold cherries at three kopecks a pail. One could pay three kopecks and pick as one liked. Their women were handsome and looked well fed, they were fond of finery, and never did anything even on working-days, but spent all their time sitting on the ledge in front of their houses and searching in each other's heads.

But at last there was the sound of footsteps. Lyubka, a girl of twenty, with bare feet and a red dress, came into the room... She looked sideways at

Yergunov and walked twice from one end of the room to the other. She did not move simply, but with tiny steps, thrusting forward her bosom; evidently she enjoyed padding about with her bare feet on the freshly washed floor, and had taken off her shoes on purpose.

Kalashnikov laughed at something and beckoned her with his finger. She went up to the table, and he showed her a picture of the Prophet Elijah, who, driving three horses abreast, was dashing up to the sky. Lyubka put her elbow on the table; her plait fell across her shoulder-a long chestnut plait tied with red ribbon at the end-and it almost touched the floor. She, too, smiled.

"A splendid, wonderful picture," said Kalashnikov. "Wonderful," he repeated, and motioned with his hand as though he wanted to take the reins instead of Elijah.

The wind howled in the stove; something growled and squeaked as though a big dog had strangled a rat.

"Ugh! the unclean spirits are abroad!" said Lyubka.

"That's the wind," said Kalashnikov; and after a pause he raised his eyes to Yergunov and asked:

"And what is your learned opinion, Osip Vassilyitch-are there devils in this world or not?"

"What's one to say, brother?" said Yergunov, and he shrugged one shoulder. "If one reasons from science, of course there are no devils, for it's a superstition; but if one looks at it simply, as you and I do now, there are devils, to put it shortly... I have seen a great deal in my life... When I finished my studies I served as medical assistant in the army in a regiment of the dragoons, and I have been in the war, of course. I have a medal and a decoration from the Red Cross, but after the treaty of San Stefano I returned to Russia and went into the service of the Zemstvo. And in consequence of my enormous circulation about the world, I may say I have seen more than many another has dreamed of. It has happened to me to see devils, too; that is, not devils with horns and a tail-that is all nonsense-but just, to speak precisely, something of the sort."

"Where?" asked Kalashnikov.

"In various places. There is no need to go far. Last year I met him here-speak of him not at night-near this very inn. I was driving, I remember, to Golyshino; I was going there to vaccinate. Of course, as usual, I had the racing droshky and a horse, and all the necessary paraphernalia, and, what's more, I had a watch and all the rest of it, so I was on my guard as I drove

along, for fear of some mischance. There are lots of tramps of all sorts. I came up to the Zmeinoy Ravine-damnation take it-and was just going down it, when all at once somebody comes up to me-such a fellow! Black hair, black eyes, and his whole face looked smutted with soot... He comes straight up to the horse and takes hold of the left rein: 'Stop!' He looked at the horse, then at me, then dropped the reins, and without saying a bad word, 'Where are you going?' says he. And he showed his teeth in a grin, and his eyes were spiteful-looking.

"'Ah,' thought I, 'you are a queer customer!' 'I am going to vaccinate for the smallpox,' said I. 'And what is that to you?' 'Well, if that's so,' says he, 'vaccinate me. He bared his arm and thrust it under my nose. Of course, I did not bandy words with him; I just vaccinated him to get rid of him. Afterwards I looked at my lancet and it had gone rusty."

The peasant who was asleep near the stove suddenly turned over and flung off the sheepskin; to his great surprise, Yergunov recognized the stranger he had met that day at Zmeinoy Ravine. This peasant's hair, beard, and eyes were black as soot; his face was swarthy; and, to add to the effect, there was a black spot the size of a lentil on his right cheek. He looked mockingly at the hospital assistant and said:

"I did take hold of the left rein-that was so; but about the smallpox you are lying, sir. And there was not a word said about the smallpox between us."

Yergunov was disconcerted.

"I'm not talking about you," he said. "Lie down, since you are lying down."

The dark-skinned peasant had never been to the hospital, and Yergunov did not know who he was or where he came from; and now, looking at him, he made up his mind that the man must be a gypsy. The peasant got up and, stretching and yawning loudly, went up to Lyubka and Kalashnikov, and sat down beside them, and he, too, began looking at the book. His sleepy face softened and a look of envy came into it.

"Look, Merik," Lyubka said to him; "get me such horses and I will drive to heaven."

"Sinners can't drive to heaven," said Kalashnikov. "That's for holiness."

Then Lyubka laid the table and brought in a big piece of fat bacon, salted cucumbers, a wooden platter of boiled meat cut up into little pieces, then a frying-pan, in which there were sausages and cabbage spluttering. A cut-glass decanter of vodka, which diffused a smell of orange-peel all over the room

when it was poured out, was put on the table also.

Yergunov was annoyed that Kalashnikov and the dark fellow Merik talked together and took no notice of him at all, behaving exactly as though he were not in the room. And he wanted to talk to them, to brag, to drink, to have a good meal, and if possible to have a little fun with Lyubka, who sat down near him half a dozen times while they were at supper, and, as though by accident, brushed against him with her handsome shoulders and passed her hands over her broad hips. She was a healthy, active girl, always laughing and never still: she would sit down, then get up, and when she was sitting down she would keep turning first her face and then her back to her neighbour, like a fidgety child, and never failed to brush against him with her elbows or her knees.

And he was displeased, too, that the peasants drank only a glass each and no more, and it was awkward for him to drink alone. But he could not refrain from taking a second glass, all the same, then a third, and he ate all the sausage. He brought himself to flatter the peasants, that they might accept him as one of the party instead of holding him at arm's length.

"You are a fine set of fellows in Bogalyovka!" he said, and wagged his head.

"In what way fine fellows?" enquired Kalashnikov.

"Why, about horses, for instance. Fine fellows at stealing!"

"H'm! fine fellows, you call them. Nothing but thieves and drunkards."

"They have had their day, but it is over," said Merik, after a pause. "But now they have only Filya left, and he is blind."

"Yes, there is no one but Filya," said Kalashnikov, with a sigh. "Reckon it up, he must be seventy; the German settlers knocked out one of his eyes, and he does not see well with the other. It is cataract. In old days the police officer would shout as soon as he saw him: 'Hey, you Shamil!' and all the peasants called him that-he was Shamil all over the place; and now his only name is One-eyed Filya. But he was a fine fellow! Lyuba's father, Andrey Grigoritch, and he stole one night into Rozhnovo-there were cavalry regiments stationed there-and carried off nine of the soldiers' horses, the very best of them. They weren't frightened of the sentry, and in the morning they sold all the horses for twenty roubles to the gypsy Afonka. Yes! But nowadays a man contrives to carry off a horse whose rider is drunk or asleep, and has no fear of God, but will take the very boots from a drunkard, and then slinks off and goes away a hundred and fifty miles with a horse, and

haggles at the market, haggles like a Jew, till the policeman catches him, the fool. There is no fun in it; it is simply a disgrace! A paltry set of people, I must say."

"What about Merik?" asked Lyubka.

"Merik is not one of us," said Kalashnikov. "He is a Harkov man from Mizhiritch. But that he is a bold fellow, that's the truth; there's no gainsaying that he is a fine fellow."

Lyubka looked slily and gleefully at Merik, and said:

"It wasn't for nothing they dipped him in a hole in the ice."

"How was that?" asked Yergunov.

"It was like this..." said Merik, and he laughed. "Filya carried off three horses from the Samoylenka tenants, and they pitched upon me. There were ten of the tenants at Samoylenka, and with their labourers there were thirty altogether, and all of them Molokans... So one of them says to me at the market: 'Come and have a look, Merik; we have brought some new horses from the fair.' I was interested, of course. I went up to them, and the whole lot of them, thirty men, tied my hands behind me and led me to the river. 'We'll show you fine horses,' they said. One hole in the ice was there already; they cut another beside it seven feet away. Then, to be sure, they took a cord and put a noose under my armpits, and tied a crooked stick to the other end, long enough to reach both holes. They thrust the stick in and dragged it through. I went plop into the ice-hole just as I was, in my fur coat and my high boots, while they stood and shoved me, one with his foot and one with his stick, then dragged me under the ice and pulled me out of the other hole."

Lyubka shuddered and shrugged.

"At first I was in a fever from the cold," Merik went on, "but when they pulled me out I was helpless, and lay in the snow, and the Molokans stood round and hit me with sticks on my knees and my elbows. It hurt fearfully. They beat me and they went away... and everything on me was frozen, my clothes were covered with ice. I got up, but I couldn't move. Thank God, a woman drove by and gave me a lift."

Meanwhile Yergunov had drunk five or six glasses of vodka; his heart felt lighter, and he longed to tell some extraordinary, wonderful story too, and to show that he, too, was a bold fellow and not afraid of anything.

"I'll tell you what happened to us in Penza Province..." he began.

Either because he had drunk a great deal and was a little tipsy, or perhaps because he had twice been detected in a lie, the peasants took not the slightest

notice of him, and even left off answering his questions. What was worse, they permitted themselves a frankness in his presence that made him feel uncomfortable and cold all over, and that meant that they took no notice of him.

Kalashnikov had the dignified manners of a sedate and sensible man; he spoke weightily, and made the sign of the cross over his mouth every time he yawned, and no one could have supposed that this was a thief, a heartless thief who had stripped poor creatures, who had already been twice in prison, and who had been sentenced by the commune to exile in Siberia, and had been bought off by his father and uncle, who were as great thieves and rogues as he was. Merik gave himself the airs of a bravo. He saw that Lyubka and Kalashnikov were admiring him, and looked upon himself as a very fine fellow, and put his arms akimbo, squared his chest, or stretched so that the bench creaked under him...

After supper Kalashnikov prayed to the holy image without getting up from his seat, and shook hands with Merik; the latter prayed too, and shook Kalashnikov's hand. Lyubka cleared away the supper, shook out on the table some peppermint biscuits, dried nuts, and pumpkin seeds, and placed two bottles of sweet wine.

"The kingdom of heaven and peace everlasting to Andrey Grigoritch," said Kalashnikov, clinking glasses with Merik. "When he was alive we used to gather together here or at his brother Martin's, and-my word! my word! what men, what talks! Remarkable conversations! Martin used to be here, and Filya, and Fyodor Stukotey... It was all done in style, it was all in keeping... And what fun we had! We did have fun, we did have fun!"

Lyubka went out and soon afterwards came back wearing a green kerchief and beads.

"Look, Merik, what Kalashnikov brought me to-day," she said.

She looked at herself in the looking-glass, and tossed her head several times to make the beads jingle. And then she opened a chest and began taking out, first, a cotton dress with red and blue flowers on it, and then a red one with flounces which rustled and crackled like paper, then a new kerchief, dark blue, shot with many colours-and all these things she showed and flung up her hands, laughing as though astonished that she had such treasures.

Kalashnikov tuned the balalaika and began playing it, but Yergunov could not make out what sort of song he was singing, and whether it was gay or melancholy, because at one moment it was so mournful he wanted to cry, and

at the next it would be merry. Merik suddenly jumped up and began tapping with his heels on the same spot, then, brandishing his arms, he moved on his heels from the table to the stove, from the stove to the chest, then he bounded up as though he had been stung, clicked the heels of his boots together in the air, and began going round and round in a crouching position. Lyubka waved both her arms, uttered a desperate shriek, and followed him. At first she moved sideways, like a snake, as though she wanted to steal up to someone and strike him from behind. She tapped rapidly with her bare heels as Merik had done with the heels of his boots, then she turned round and round like a top and crouched down, and her red dress was blown out like a bell. Merik, looking angrily at her, and showing his teeth in a grin, flew towards her in the same crouching posture as though he wanted to crush her with his terrible legs, while she jumped up, flung back her head, and waving her arms as a big bird does its wings, floated across the room scarcely touching the floor...

"What a flame of a girl!" thought Yergunov, sitting on the chest, and from there watching the dance. "What fire! Give up everything for her, and it would be too little..."

And he regretted that he was a hospital assistant, and not a simple peasant, that he wore a reefer coat and a chain with a gilt key on it instead of a blue shirt with a cord tied round the waist. Then he could boldly have sung, danced, flung both arms round Lyubka as Merik did...

The sharp tapping, shouts, and whoops set the crockery ringing in the cupboard and the flame of the candle dancing.

The thread broke and the beads were scattered all over the floor, the green kerchief slipped off, and Lyubka was transformed into a red cloud flitting by and flashing black eyes, and it seemed as though in another second Merik's arms and legs would drop off.

But finally Merik stamped for the last time, and stood still as though turned to stone. Exhausted and almost breathless, Lyubka sank on to his bosom and leaned against him as against a post, and he put his arms round her, and looking into her eyes, said tenderly and caressingly, as though in jest:

"I'll find out where your old mother's money is hidden, I'll murder her and cut your little throat for you, and after that I will set fire to the inn... People will think you have perished in the fire, and with your money I shall go to Kuban. I'll keep droves of horses and flocks of sheep..."

Lyubka made no answer, but only looked at him with a guilty air, and

asked:

"And is it nice in Kuban, Merik?"

He said nothing, but went to the chest, sat down, and sank into thought; most likely he was dreaming of Kuban.

"It's time for me to be going," said Kalashnikov, getting up. "Filya must be waiting for me. Goodbye, Lyuba."

Yergunov went out into the yard to see that Kalashnikov did not go off with his horse. The snowstorm still persisted. White clouds were floating about the yard, their long tails clinging to the rough grass and the bushes, while on the other side of the fence in the open country huge giants in white robes with wide sleeves were whirling round and falling to the ground, and getting up again to wave their arms and fight. And the wind, the wind! The bare birches and cherry-trees, unable to endure its rude caresses, bowed low down to the ground and wailed: "God, for what sin hast Thou bound us to the earth and will not let us go free?"

"Wo!" said Kalashnikov sternly, and he got on his horse; one half of the gate was opened, and by it lay a high snowdrift. "Well, get on!" shouted Kalashnikov. His little short-legged nag set off, and sank up to its stomach in the drift at once. Kalashnikov was white all over with the snow, and soon vanished from sight with his horse.

When Yergunov went back into the room, Lyubka was creeping about the floor picking up her beads; Merik was not there.

"A splendid girl!" thought Yergunov, as he lay down on the bench and put his coat under his head. "Oh, if only Merik were not here." Lyubka excited him as she crept about the floor by the bench, and he thought that if Merik had not been there he would certainly have got up and embraced her, and then one would see what would happen. It was true she was only a girl, but not likely to be chaste; and even if she were—need one stand on ceremony in a den of thieves? Lyubka collected her beads and went out. The candle burnt down and the flame caught the paper in the candlestick. Yergunov laid his revolver and matches beside him, and put out the candle. The light before the holy images flickered so much that it hurt his eyes, and patches of light danced on the ceiling, on the floor, and on the cupboard, and among them he had visions of Lyubka, buxom, full-bosomed: now she was turning round like a top, now she was exhausted and breathless...

"Oh, if the devils would carry off that Merik," he thought.

The little lamp gave a last flicker, spluttered, and went out. Someone, it

must have been Merik, came into the room and sat down on the bench. He puffed at his pipe, and for an instant lighted up a dark cheek with a patch on it. Yergunov's throat was irritated by the horrible fumes of the tobacco smoke.

"What filthy tobacco you have got-damnation take it!" said Yergunov. "It makes me positively sick."

"I mix my tobacco with the flowers of the oats," answered Merik after a pause. "It is better for the chest."

He smoked, spat, and went out again. Half an hour passed, and all at once there was the gleam of a light in the passage. Merik appeared in a coat and cap, then Lyubka with a candle in her hand.

"Do stay, Merik," said Lyubka in an imploring voice.

"No, Lyuba, don't keep me."

"Listen, Merik," said Lyubka, and her voice grew soft and tender.

"I know you will find mother's money, and will do for her and for me, and will go to Kuban and love other girls; but God be with you.

I only ask you one thing, sweetheart: do stay!"

"No, I want some fun..." said Merik, fastening his belt.

"But you have nothing to go on... You came on foot; what are you going on?"

Merik bent down to Lyubka and whispered something in her ear; she looked towards the door and laughed through her tears.

"He is asleep, the puffed-up devil..." she said.

Merik embraced her, kissed her vigorously, and went out. Yergunov thrust his revolver into his pocket, jumped up, and ran after him.

"Get out of the way!" he said to Lyubka, who hurriedly bolted the door of the entry and stood across the threshold. "Let me pass! Why are you standing here?"

"What do you want to go out for?"

"To have a look at my horse."

Lyubka gazed up at him with a sly and caressing look.

"Why look at it? You had better look at me..." she said, then she bent down and touched with her finger the gilt watch-key that hung on his chain.

"Let me pass, or he will go off on my horse," said Yergunov. "Let me go, you devil!" he shouted, and giving her an angry blow on the shoulder, he pressed his chest against her with all his might to push her away from the door, but she kept tight hold of the bolt, and was like iron.

"Let me go!" he shouted, exhausted; "he will go off with it, I tell you."

"Why should he? He won't." Breathing hard and rubbing her shoulder, which hurt, she looked up at him again, flushed a little and laughed. "Don't go away, dear heart," she said; "I am dull alone."

Yergunov looked into her eyes, hesitated, and put his arms round her; she did not resist.

"Come, no nonsense; let me go," he begged her. She did not speak.

"I heard you just now," he said, "telling Merik that you love him."

"I dare say... My heart knows who it is I love."

She put her finger on the key again, and said softly: "Give me that."

Yergunov unfastened the key and gave it to her. She suddenly craned her neck and listened with a grave face, and her expression struck Yergunov as cold and cunning; he thought of his horse, and now easily pushed her aside and ran out into the yard. In the shed a sleepy pig was grunting with lazy regularity and a cow was knocking her horn. Yergunov lighted a match and saw the pig, and the cow, and the dogs, which rushed at him on all sides at seeing the light, but there was no trace of the horse. Shouting and waving his arms at the dogs, stumbling over the drifts and sticking in the snow, he ran out at the gate and fell to gazing into the darkness. He strained his eyes to the utmost, and saw only the snow flying and the snowflakes distinctly forming into all sorts of shapes; at one moment the white, laughing face of a corpse would peep out of the darkness, at the next a white horse would gallop by with an Amazon in a muslin dress upon it, at the next a string of white swans would fly overhead... Shaking with anger and cold, and not knowing what to do, Yergunov fired his revolver at the dogs, and did not hit one of them; then he rushed back to the house.

When he went into the entry he distinctly heard someone scurry out of the room and bang the door. It was dark in the room. Yergunov pushed against the door; it was locked. Then, lighting match after match, he rushed back into the entry, from there into the kitchen, and from the kitchen into a little room where all the walls were hung with petticoats and dresses, where there was a smell of cornflowers and fennel, and a bedstead with a perfect mountain of pillows, standing in the corner by the stove; this must have been the old mother's room. From there he passed into another little room, and here he saw Lyubka. She was lying on a chest, covered with a gay-coloured patchwork cotton quilt, pretending to be asleep. A little ikon-lamp was burning in the corner above the pillow.

"Where is my horse?" Yergunov asked.

Lyubka did not stir.

"Where is my horse, I am asking you?" Yergunov repeated still more sternly, and he tore the quilt off her. "I am asking you, she-devil!" he shouted.

She jumped up on her knees, and with one hand holding her shift and with the other trying to clutch the quilt, huddled against the wall... She looked at Yergunov with repulsion and terror in her eyes, and, like a wild beast in a trap, kept cunning watch on his faintest movement.

"Tell me where my horse is, or I'll knock the life out of you," shouted Yergunov.

"Get away, dirty brute!" she said in a hoarse voice.

Yergunov seized her by the shift near the neck and tore it. And then he could not restrain himself, and with all his might embraced the girl. But hissing with fury, she slipped out of his arms, and freeing one hand-the other was tangled in the torn shift-hit him a blow with her fist on the skull.

His head was dizzy with the pain, there was a ringing and rattling in his ears, he staggered back, and at that moment received another blow-this time on the temple. Reeling and clutching at the doorposts, that he might not fall, he made his way to the room where his things were, and lay down on the bench; then after lying for a little time, took the matchbox out of his pocket and began lighting match after match for no object: he lit it, blew it out, and threw it under the table, and went on till all the matches were gone.

Meanwhile the air began to turn blue outside, the cocks began to crow, but his head still ached, and there was an uproar in his ears as though he were sitting under a railway bridge and hearing the trains passing over his head. He got, somehow, into his coat and cap; the saddle and the bundle of his purchases he could not find, his knapsack was empty: it was not for nothing that someone had scurried out of the room when he came in from the yard.

He took a poker from the kitchen to keep off the dogs, and went out into the yard, leaving the door open. The snow-storm had subsided and it was calm outside... When he went out at the gate, the white plain looked dead, and there was not a single bird in the morning sky. On both sides of the road and in the distance there were bluish patches of young copse.

Yergunov began thinking how he would be greeted at the hospital and what the doctor would say to him; it was absolutely necessary to think of that, and to prepare beforehand to answer questions he would be asked, but this thought grew blurred and slipped away. He walked along thinking of nothing

but Lyubka, of the peasants with whom he had passed the night; he remembered how, after Lyubka struck him the second time, she had bent down to the floor for the quilt, and how her loose hair had fallen on the floor. His mind was in a maze, and he wondered why there were in the world doctors, hospital assistants, merchants, clerks, and peasants instead of simple free men? There are, to be sure, free birds, free beasts, a free Merik, and they are not afraid of anyone, and don't need anyone! And whose idea was it, who had decreed that one must get up in the morning, dine at midday, go to bed in the evening; that a doctor takes precedence of a hospital assistant; that one must live in rooms and love only one's wife? And why not the contrary-dine at night and sleep in the day? Ah, to jump on a horse without enquiring whose it is, to ride races with the wind like a devil, over fields and forests and ravines, to make love to girls, to mock at everyone...

Yergunov thrust the poker into the snow, pressed his forehead to the cold white trunk of a birch-tree, and sank into thought; and his grey, monotonous life, his wages, his subordinate position, the dispensary, the everlasting to-do with the bottles and blisters, struck him as contemptible, sickening.

"Who says it's a sin to enjoy oneself?" he asked himself with vexation. "Those who say that have never lived in freedom like Merik and Kalashnikov, and have never loved Lyubka; they have been beggars all their lives, have lived without any pleasure, and have only loved their wives, who are like frogs."

And he thought about himself that he had not hitherto been a thief, a swindler, or even a brigand, simply because he could not, or had not yet met with a suitable opportunity.

—

A year and a half passed. In spring, after Easter, Yergunov, who had long before been dismissed from the hospital and was hanging about without a job, came out of the tavern in Ryepino and sauntered aimlessly along the street.

He went out into the open country. Here there was the scent of spring, and a warm caressing wind was blowing. The calm, starry night looked down from the sky on the earth. My God, how infinite the depth of the sky, and with what fathomless immensity it stretched over the world! The world is created well enough, only why and with what right do people, thought Yergunov, divide their fellows into the sober and the drunken, the employed and the dismissed, and so on. Why do the sober and well fed sleep comfortably in their homes while the drunken and the hungry must wander

about the country without a refuge? Why was it that if anyone had not a job and did not get a salary he had to go hungry, without clothes and boots? Whose idea was it? Why was it the birds and the wild beasts in the woods did not have jobs and get salaries, but lived as they pleased?

Far away in the sky a beautiful crimson glow lay quivering, stretched wide over the horizon. Yergunov stopped, and for a long time he gazed at it, and kept wondering why was it that if he had carried off someone else's samovar the day before and sold it for drink in the taverns it would be a sin? Why was it?

Two carts drove by on the road; in one of them there was a woman asleep, in the other sat an old man without a cap on.

"Grandfather, where is that fire?" asked Yergunov.

"Andrey Tchirikov's inn," answered the old man.

And Yergunov recalled what had happened to him eighteen months before in the winter, in that very inn, and how Merik had boasted; and he imagined the old woman and Lyubka, with their throats cut, burning, and he envied Merik. And when he walked back to the tavern, looking at the houses of the rich publicans, cattle-dealers, and blacksmiths, he reflected how nice it would be to steal by night into some rich man's house!

THE PETCHENYEG

IVAN ABRAMITCH ZHMUHIN, a retired Cossack officer, who had once served in the Caucasus, but now lived on his own farm, and who had once been young, strong, and vigorous, but now was old, dried up, and bent, with shaggy eyebrows and a greenish-grey moustache, was returning from the town to his farm one hot summer's day. In the town he had confessed and received absolution, and had made his will at the notary's (a fortnight before he had had a slight stroke), and now all the while he was in the railway carriage he was haunted by melancholy, serious thoughts of approaching death, of the vanity of vanities, of the transitoriness of all things earthly. At the station of Provalye-there is such a one on the Donetsk line-a fair-haired, plump, middle-aged gentleman with a shabby portfolio stepped into the carriage and sat down opposite. They got into conversation.

"Yes," said Ivan Abramitch, looking pensively out of window, "it is never too late to marry. I myself married when I was forty-eight; I was told it was late, but it has turned out that it was not late or early, but simply that it would have been better not to marry at all. Everyone is soon tired of his wife, but not everyone tells the truth, because, you know, people are ashamed of an unhappy home life and conceal it. It's 'Manya this' and 'Manya that' with many a man by his wife's side, but if he had his way he'd put that Manya in a sack and drop her in the water. It's dull with one's wife, it's mere foolishness. And it's no better with one's children, I make bold to assure you. I have two of them, the rascals. There's nowhere for them to be taught out here in the steppe; I haven't the money to send them to school in Novo Tcherkask, and they live here like young wolves. Next thing they will be murdering someone on the highroad."

The fair-haired gentleman listened attentively, answered questions briefly in a low voice, and was apparently a gentleman of gentle and modest disposition. He mentioned that he was a lawyer, and that he was going to the village Dyuevka on business.

"Why, merciful heavens, that is six miles from me!" said Zhmuhin in a tone of voice as though someone were disputing with him. "But excuse me, you won't find horses at the station now. To my mind, the very best thing you can do, you know, is to come straight to me, stay the night, you know, and in the morning drive over with my horses."

The lawyer thought a moment and accepted the invitation.

When they reached the station the sun was already low over the steppe. They said nothing all the way from the station to the farm: the jolting prevented conversation. The trap bounded up and down, squeaked, and seemed to be sobbing, and the lawyer, who was sitting very uncomfortably, stared before him, miserably hoping to see the farm. After they had driven five or six miles there came into view in the distance a low-pitched house and a yard enclosed by a fence made of dark, flat stones standing on end; the roof was green, the stucco was peeling off, and the windows were little narrow slits like screwed-up eyes. The farm stood in the full sunshine, and there was no sign either of water or trees anywhere round. Among the neighbouring landowners and the peasants it was known as the Petchenyegs' farm. Many years before, a land surveyor, who was passing through the neighbourhood and put up at the farm, spent the whole night talking to Ivan Abramitch, was not favourably impressed, and as he was driving away in the morning said to him grimly:

"You are a Petchenyeg,* my good sir!"

* The Petchenyegs were a tribe of wild Mongolian nomads who made frequent inroads upon the Russians in the tenth and eleventh centuries.-
Translator's Note.

From this came the nickname, the Petchenyegs' farm, which stuck to the place even more when Zhmuhin's boys grew up and began to make raids on the orchards and kitchen-gardens. Ivan Abramitch was called "You Know," as he usually talked a very great deal and frequently made use of that expression.

In the yard near a barn Zhmuhin's sons were standing, one a young man of nineteen, the other a younger lad, both barefoot and bareheaded. Just at the moment when the trap drove into the yard the younger one flung high up a hen which, cackling, described an arc in the air; the elder shot at it with a gun and the hen fell dead on the earth.

"Those are my boys learning to shoot birds flying," said Zhmuhin.

In the entry the travellers were met by a little thin woman with a pale face, still young and beautiful; from her dress she might have been taken for a servant.

"And this, allow me to introduce her," said Zhmuhin, "is the mother of my young cubs. Come, Lyubov Osipovna," he said, addressing her, "you must be spry, mother, and get something for our guest. Let us have supper.

Look sharp!"

The house consisted of two parts: in one was the parlour and beside it old Zhmuhin's bedroom, both stuffy rooms with low ceilings and multitudes of flies and wasps, and in the other was the kitchen in which the cooking and washing was done and the labourers had their meals; here geese and turkey-hens were sitting on their eggs under the benches, and here were the beds of Lyubov Osipovna and her two sons. The furniture in the parlour was unpainted and evidently roughly made by a carpenter; guns, game-bags, and whips were hanging on the walls, and all this old rubbish was covered with the rust of years and looked grey with dust. There was not one picture; in the corner was a dingy board which had at one time been an ikon.

A young Little Russian woman laid the table and handed ham, then beetroot soup. The visitor refused vodka and ate only bread and cucumbers.

"How about ham?" asked Zhmuhin.

"Thank you, I don't eat it," answered the visitor, "I don't eat meat at all."

"Why is that?"

"I am a vegetarian. Killing animals is against my principles."

Zhmuhin thought a minute and then said slowly with a sigh:

"Yes... to be sure... I saw a man who did not eat meat in town, too. It's a new religion they've got now. Well, it's good. We can't go on always shooting and slaughtering, you know; we must give it up some day and leave even the beasts in peace. It's a sin to kill, it's a sin, there is no denying it. Sometimes one kills a hare and wounds him in the leg, and he cries like a child... So it must hurt him!"

"Of course it hurts him; animals suffer just like human beings."

"That's true," Zhmuhin assented. "I understand that very well," he went on, musing, "only there is this one thing I don't understand: suppose, you know, everyone gave up eating meat, what would become of the domestic animals-fowls and geese, for instance?"

"Fowls and geese would live in freedom like wild birds."

"Now I understand. To be sure, crows and jackdaws get on all right without us. Yes... Fowls and geese and hares and sheep, all will live in freedom, rejoicing, you know, and praising God; and they will not fear us, peace and concord will come. Only there is one thing, you know, I can't understand," Zhmuhin went on, glancing at the ham. "How will it be with the pigs? What is to be done with them?"

"They will be like all the rest-that is, they will live in freedom."

"Ah! Yes. But allow me to say, if they were not slaughtered they would multiply, you know, and then good-bye to the kitchen-gardens and the meadows. Why, a pig, if you let it free and don't look after it, will ruin everything in a day. A pig is a pig, and it is not for nothing it is called a pig..."

They finished supper. Zhmuhin got up from the table and for a long while walked up and down the room, talking and talking... He was fond of talking of something important or serious and was fond of meditating, and in his old age he had a longing to reach some haven, to be reassured, that he might not be so frightened of dying. He had a longing for meekness, spiritual calm, and confidence in himself, such as this guest of theirs had, who had satisfied his hunger on cucumbers and bread, and believed that doing so made him more perfect; he was sitting on a chest, plump and healthy, keeping silent and patiently enduring his boredom, and in the dusk when one glanced at him from the entry he looked like a big round stone which one could not move from its place. If a man has something to lay hold of in life he is all right.

Zhmuhin went through the entry to the porch, and then he could be heard sighing and saying reflectively to himself: "Yes... To be sure... " By now it was dark, and here and there stars could be seen in the sky. They had not yet lighted up indoors. Someone came into the parlour as noiselessly as a shadow and stood still near the door. It was Lyubov Osipovna, Zhmuhin's wife.

"Are you from the town?" she asked timidly, not looking at her visitor.

"Yes, I live in the town."

"Perhaps you are something in the learned way, sir; be so kind as to advise us. We ought to send in a petition."

"To whom?" asked the visitor.

"We have two sons, kind gentleman, and they ought to have been sent to school long ago, but we never see anyone and have no one to advise us. And I know nothing. For if they are not taught they will have to serve in the army as common Cossacks. It's not right, sir! They can't read and write, they are worse than peasants, and Ivan Abramitch himself can't stand them and won't let them indoors. But they are not to blame. The younger one, at any rate, ought to be sent to school, it is such a pity!" she said slowly, and there was a quiver in her voice; and it seemed incredible that a woman so small and so youthful could have grown-up children. "Oh, it's such a pity!"

"You don't know anything about it, mother, and it is not your affair," said Zhmuhin, appearing in the doorway. "Don't pester our guest with your wild

talk. Go away, mother!"

Lyubov Osipovna went out, and in the entry repeated once more in a thin little voice: "Oh, it's such a pity!"

A bed was made up for the visitor on the sofa in the parlour, and that it might not be dark for him they lighted the lamp before the ikon. Zhmuhin went to bed in his own room. And as he lay there he thought of his soul, of his age, of his recent stroke which had so frightened him and made him think of death. He was fond of philosophizing when he was in quietness by himself, and then he fancied that he was a very earnest, deep thinker, and that nothing in this world interested him but serious questions. And now he kept thinking and he longed to pitch upon some one significant thought unlike others, which would be a guide to him in life, and he wanted to think out principles of some sort for himself so as to make his life as deep and earnest as he imagined that he felt himself to be. It would be a good thing for an old man like him to abstain altogether from meat, from superfluities of all sorts. The time when men give up killing each other and animals would come sooner or later, it could not but be so, and he imagined that time to himself and clearly pictured himself living in peace with all the animals, and suddenly he thought again of the pigs, and everything was in a tangle in his brain.

"It's a queer business, Lord have mercy upon us," he muttered, sighing heavily. "Are you asleep?" he asked.

"No."

Zhmuhin got out of bed and stopped in the doorway with nothing but his shirt on, displaying to his guest his sinewy legs, that looked as dry as sticks.

"Nowadays, you know," he began, "all sorts of telegraphs, telephones, and marvels of all kinds, in fact, have come in, but people are no better than they were. They say that in our day, thirty or forty years ago, men were coarse and cruel; but isn't it just the same now? We certainly did not stand on ceremony in our day. I remember in the Caucasus when we were stationed by a little river with nothing to do for four whole months-I was an under-officer at that time-something queer happened, quite in the style of a novel. Just on the banks of that river, you know, where our division was encamped, a wretched prince whom we had killed not long before was buried. And at night, you know, the princess used to come to his grave and weep. She would wail and wail, and moan and moan, and make us so depressed we couldn't sleep, and that's the fact. We couldn't sleep one night, we couldn't sleep a

second; well, we got sick of it. And from a common-sense point of view you really can't go without your sleep for the devil knows what (excuse the expression). We took that princess and gave her a good thrashing, and she gave up coming. There's an instance for you. Nowadays, of course, there is not the same class of people, and they are not given to thrashing and they live in cleaner style, and there is more learning, but, you know, the soul is just the same: there is no change. Now, look here, there's a landowner living here among us; he has mines, you know; all sorts of tramps without passports who don't know where to go work for him. On Saturdays he has to settle up with the workmen, but he doesn't care to pay them, you know, he grudges the money. So he's got hold of a foreman who is a tramp too, though he does wear a hat. 'Don't you pay them anything,' he says, 'not a kopeck; they'll beat you, and let them beat you,' says he, 'but you put up with it, and I'll pay you ten roubles every Saturday for it.' So on the Saturday evening the workmen come to settle up in the usual way; the foreman says to them: 'Nothing!' Well, word for word, as the master said, they begin swearing and using their fists... They beat him and they kick him... you know, they are a set of men brutalized by hunger-they beat him till he is senseless, and then they go each on his way. The master gives orders for cold water to be poured on the foreman, then flings ten roubles in his face. And he takes it and is pleased too, for indeed he'd be ready to be hanged for three roubles, let alone ten. Yes... and on Monday a new gang of workmen arrive; they work, for they have nowhere to go... On Saturday it is the same story over again."

The visitor turned over on the other side with his face to the back of the sofa and muttered something.

"And here's another instance," Zhmuhin went on. "We had the Siberian plague here, you know-the cattle die off like flies, I can tell you-and the veterinary surgeons came here, and strict orders were given that the dead cattle were to be buried at a distance deep in the earth, that lime was to be thrown over them, and so on, you know, on scientific principles. My horse died too. I buried it with every precaution, and threw over three hundredweight of lime over it. And what do you think? My fine fellows-my precious sons, I mean-dug it up, skinned it, and sold the hide for three roubles; there's an instance for you. So people have grown no better, and however you feed a wolf he will always look towards the forest; there it is. It gives one something to think about, eh? How do you look at it?"

On one side a flash of lightning gleamed through a chink in the window-

blinds. There was the stifling feeling of a storm coming, the gnats were biting, and Zhmuhin, as he lay in his bedroom meditating, sighed and groaned and said to himself: "Yes, to be sure – " and there was no possibility of getting to sleep. Somewhere far, far away there was a growl of thunder.

"Are you asleep?"

"No," answered the visitor.

Zhmuhin got up, and thudding with his heels walked through the parlour and the entry to the kitchen to get a drink of water.

"The worst thing in the world, you know, is stupidity," he said a little later, coming back with a dipper. "My Lyubov Osipovna is on her knees saying her prayers. She prays every night, you know, and bows down to the ground, first that her children may be sent to school; she is afraid her boys will go into the army as simple Cossacks, and that they will be whacked across their backs with sabres. But for teaching one must have money, and where is one to get it? You may break the floor beating your head against it, but if you haven't got it you haven't. And the other reason she prays is because, you know, every woman imagines there is no one in the world as unhappy as she is. I am a plain-spoken man, and I don't want to conceal anything from you. She comes of a poor family, a village priest's daughter. I married her when she was seventeen, and they accepted my offer chiefly because they hadn't enough to eat; it was nothing but poverty and misery, while I have anyway land, you see-a farm-and after all I am an officer; it was a step up for her to marry me, you know. On the very first day when she was married she cried, and she has been crying ever since, all these twenty years; she has got a watery eye. And she's always sitting and thinking, and what do you suppose she is thinking about? What can a woman think about? Why, nothing. I must own I don't consider a woman a human being."

The visitor got up abruptly and sat on the bed.

"Excuse me, I feel stifled," he said; "I will go outside."

Zhmuhin, still talking about women, drew the bolt in the entry and they both went out. A full moon was floating in the sky just over the yard, and in the moonlight the house and barn looked whiter than by day; and on the grass brilliant streaks of moonlight, white too, stretched between the black shadows. Far away on the right could be seen the steppe, above it the stars were softly glowing-and it was all mysterious, infinitely far away, as though one were gazing into a deep abyss; while on the left heavy storm-clouds, black as soot, were piling up one upon another above the steppe; their edges

were lighted up by the moon, and it looked as though there were mountains there with white snow on their peaks, dark forests, the sea. There was a flash of lightning, a faint rumble of thunder, and it seemed as though a battle were being fought in the mountains.

Quite close to the house a little night-owl screeched monotonously:

"Asleep! asleep!"

"What time is it now?" asked the visitor.

"Just after one."

"How long it is still to dawn!"

They went back to the house and lay down again. It was time to sleep, and one can usually sleep so splendidly before rain; but the old man had a hankering after serious, weighty thoughts; he wanted not simply to think but to meditate, and he meditated how good it would be, as death was near at hand, for the sake of his soul to give up the idleness which so imperceptibly swallowed up day after day, year after year, leaving no trace; to think out for himself some great exploit—for instance, to walk on foot far, far away, or to give up meat like this young man. And again he pictured to himself the time when animals would not be killed, pictured it clearly and distinctly as though he were living through that time himself; but suddenly it was all in a tangle again in his head and all was muddled.

The thunderstorm had passed over, but from the edges of the storm-clouds came rain softly pattering on the roof. Zhmuhin got up, stretching and groaning with old age, and looked into the parlour. Noticing that his visitor was not asleep, he said:

"When we were in the Caucasus, you know, there was a colonel there who was a vegetarian, too; he didn't eat meat, never went shooting, and would not let his servants catch fish. Of course, I understand that every animal ought to live in freedom and enjoy its life; only I don't understand how a pig can go about where it likes without being looked after..."

The visitor got up and sat down. His pale, haggard face expressed weariness and vexation; it was evident that he was exhausted, and only his gentleness and the delicacy of his soul prevented him from expressing his vexation in words.

"It's getting light," he said mildly. "Please have the horse brought round for me."

"Why so? Wait a little and the rain will be over."

"No, I entreat you," said the visitor in horror, with a supplicating voice;

"it is essential for me to go at once."

And he began hurriedly dressing.

By the time the horse was harnessed the sun was rising. It had just left off raining, the clouds were racing swiftly by, and the patches of blue were growing bigger and bigger in the sky. The first rays of the sun were timidly reflected below in the big puddles. The visitor walked through the entry with his portfolio to get into the trap, and at that moment Zhmuhin's wife, pale, and it seemed paler than the day before, with tear-stained eyes, looked at him intently without blinking, with the naïve expression of a little girl, and it was evident from her dejected face that she was envying him his freedom-oh, with what joy she would have gone away from there! – and she wanted to say something to him, most likely to ask advice about her children. And what a pitiable figure she was! This was not a wife, not the head of a house, not even a servant, but more like a dependent, a poor relation not wanted by anyone, a nonentity... Her husband, fussing about, talking unceasingly, was seeing his visitor off, continually running in front of him, while she huddled up to the wall with a timid, guilty air, waiting for a convenient minute to speak.

"Please come again another time," the old man kept repeating incessantly; "what we have we are glad to offer, you know."

The visitor hurriedly got into the trap, evidently with relief, as though he were afraid every minute that they would detain him. The trap lurched about as it had the day before, squeaked, and furiously rattled the pail that was tied on at the back. He glanced round at Zhmuhin with a peculiar expression; it looked as though he wanted to call him a Petchenyeg, as the surveyor had once done, or some such name, but his gentleness got the upper hand. He controlled himself and said nothing. But in the gateway he suddenly could not restrain himself; he got up and shouted loudly and angrily:

"You have bored me to death."

And he disappeared through the gate.

Near the barn Zhmuhin's sons were standing; the elder held a gun, while the younger had in his hands a grey cockerel with a bright red comb. The younger flung up the cockerel with all his might; the bird flew upwards higher than the house and turned over in the air like a pigeon. The elder boy fired and the cockerel fell like a stone.

The old man, overcome with confusion, not knowing how to explain the visitor's strange, unexpected shout, went slowly back into the house. And sitting down at the table he spent a long while meditating on the intellectual

tendencies of the day, on the universal immorality, on the telegraph, on the telephone, on velocipedes, on how unnecessary it all was; little by little he regained his composure, then slowly had a meal, drank five glasses of tea, and lay down for a nap.

A DEAD BODY

A STILL August night. A mist is rising slowly from the fields and casting an opaque veil over everything within eyesight. Lighted up by the moon, the mist gives the impression at one moment of a calm, boundless sea, at the next of an immense white wall. The air is damp and chilly. Morning is still far off. A step from the bye-road which runs along the edge of the forest a little fire is gleaming. A dead body, covered from head to foot with new white linen, is lying under a young oak-tree. A wooden ikon is lying on its breast. Beside the corpse almost on the road sits the "watch"-two peasants performing one of the most disagreeable and uninviting of peasants' duties. One, a tall young fellow with a scarcely perceptible moustache and thick black eyebrows, in a tattered sheepskin and bark shoes, is sitting on the wet grass, his feet stuck out straight in front of him, and is trying to while away the time with work. He bends his long neck, and breathing loudly through his nose, makes a spoon out of a big crooked bit of wood; the other-a little scraggy, pock-marked peasant with an aged face, a scanty moustache, and a little goat's beard-sits with his hands dangling loose on his knees, and without moving gazes listlessly at the light. A small camp-fire is lazily burning down between them, throwing a red glow on their faces. There is perfect stillness. The only sounds are the scrape of the knife on the wood and the crackling of damp sticks in the fire.

"Don't you go to sleep, Syoma..." says the young man.

"I... I am not asleep..." stammers the goat-beard.

"That's all right... It would be dreadful to sit here alone, one would be frightened. You might tell me something, Syoma."

"You are a queer fellow, Syomushka! Other people will laugh and tell a story and sing a song, but you-there is no making you out. You sit like a scarecrow in the garden and roll your eyes at the fire. You can't say anything properly... when you speak you seem frightened. I dare say you are fifty, but you have less sense than a child. Aren't you sorry that you are a simpleton?"

"I am sorry," the goat-beard answers gloomily.

"And we are sorry to see your foolishness, you may be sure. You are a good-natured, sober peasant, and the only trouble is that you have no sense in your head. You should have picked up some sense for yourself if the Lord has afflicted you and given you no understanding. You must make an effort,

Syoma... You should listen hard when anything good's being said, note it well, and keep thinking and thinking... If there is any word you don't understand, you should make an effort and think over in your head in what meaning the word is used. Do you see? Make an effort! If you don't gain some sense for yourself you'll be a simpleton and of no account at all to your dying day."

All at once a long drawn-out, moaning sound is heard in the forest. Something rustles in the leaves as though torn from the very top of the tree and falls to the ground. All this is faintly repeated by the echo. The young man shudders and looks enquiringly at his companion.

"It's an owl at the little birds," says Syoma, gloomily.

"Why, Syoma, it's time for the birds to fly to the warm countries!"

"To be sure, it is time."

"It is chilly at dawn now. It is co-old. The crane is a chilly creature, it is tender. Such cold is death to it. I am not a crane, but I am frozen... Put some more wood on!"

Syoma gets up and disappears in the dark undergrowth. While he is busy among the bushes, breaking dry twigs, his companion puts his hand over his eyes and starts at every sound. Syoma brings an armful of wood and lays it on the fire. The flame irresolutely licks the black twigs with its little tongues, then suddenly, as though at the word of command, catches them and throws a crimson light on the faces, the road, the white linen with its prominences where the hands and feet of the corpse raise it, the ikon. The "watch" is silent. The young man bends his neck still lower and sets to work with still more nervous haste. The goat-beard sits motionless as before and keeps his eyes fixed on the fire...

"Ye that love not Zion... shall be put to shame by the Lord." A falsetto voice is suddenly heard singing in the stillness of the night, then slow footsteps are audible, and the dark figure of a man in a short monkish cassock and a broad-brimmed hat, with a wallet on his shoulders, comes into sight on the road in the crimson firelight.

"Thy will be done, O Lord! Holy Mother!" the figure says in a husky falsetto. "I saw the fire in the outer darkness and my soul leapt for joy... At first I thought it was men grazing a drove of horses, then I thought it can't be that, since no horses were to be seen. 'Aren't they thieves,' I wondered, 'aren't they robbers lying in wait for a rich Lazarus? Aren't they the gypsy people offering sacrifices to idols? And my soul leapt for joy. 'Go, Feodosy, servant

of God,' I said to myself, 'and win a martyr's crown!' And I flew to the fire like a light-winged moth. Now I stand before you, and from your outer aspect I judge of your souls: you are not thieves and you are not heathens. Peace be to you!"

"Good-evening."

"Good orthodox people, do you know how to reach the Makuhinsky Brickyards from here?"

"It's close here. You go straight along the road; when you have gone a mile and a half there will be Ananova, our village. From the village, father, you turn to the right by the river-bank, and so you will get to the brickyards. It's two miles from Ananova."

"God give you health. And why are you sitting here?"

"We are sitting here watching. You see, there is a dead body..."

"What? what body? Holy Mother!"

The pilgrim sees the white linen with the ikon on it, and starts so violently that his legs give a little skip. This unexpected sight has an overpowering effect upon him. He huddles together and stands as though rooted to the spot, with wide-open mouth and staring eyes. For three minutes he is silent as though he could not believe his eyes, then begins muttering:

"O Lord! Holy Mother! I was going along not meddling with anyone, and all at once such an affliction."

"What may you be?" enquires the young man. "Of the clergy?"

"No... no... I go from one monastery to another... Do you know Mi... Mihail Polikarpitch, the foreman of the brickyard? Well, I am his nephew... Thy will be done, O Lord! Why are you here?"

"We are watching... we are told to."

"Yes, yes..." mutters the man in the cassock, passing his hand over his eyes. "And where did the deceased come from?"

"He was a stranger."

"Such is life! But I'll... er... be getting on, brothers... I feel flustered. I am more afraid of the dead than of anything, my dear souls! And only fancy! while this man was alive he wasn't noticed, while now when he is dead and given over to corruption we tremble before him as before some famous general or a bishop... Such is life; was he murdered, or what?"

"The Lord knows! Maybe he was murdered, or maybe he died of himself."

"Yes, yes... Who knows, brothers? Maybe his soul is now tasting the joys

of Paradise."

"His soul is still hovering here, near his body," says the young man. "It does not depart from the body for three days."

"H'm, yes!... How chilly the nights are now! It sets one's teeth chattering... So then I am to go straight on and on?..."

"Till you get to the village, and then you turn to the right by the river-bank."

"By the river-bank... To be sure... Why am I standing still?

I must go on. Farewell, brothers."

The man in the cassock takes five steps along the road and stops.

"I've forgotten to put a kopeck for the burying," he says. "Good orthodox friends, can I give the money?"

"You ought to know best, you go the round of the monasteries. If he died a natural death it would go for the good of his soul; if it's a suicide it's a sin."

"That's true... And maybe it really was a suicide! So I had better keep my money. Oh, sins, sins! Give me a thousand roubles and I would not consent to sit here... Farewell, brothers."

The cassock slowly moves away and stops again.

"I can't make up my mind what I am to do," he mutters. "To stay here by the fire and wait till daybreak... I am frightened; to go on is dreadful, too. The dead man will haunt me all the way in the darkness... The Lord has chastised me indeed! Over three hundred miles I have come on foot and nothing happened, and now I am near home and there's trouble. I can't go on..."

"It is dreadful, that is true."

"I am not afraid of wolves, of thieves, or of darkness, but I am afraid of the dead. I am afraid of them, and that is all about it. Good orthodox brothers, I entreat you on my knees, see me to the village."

"We've been told not to go away from the body."

"No one will see, brothers. Upon my soul, no one will see! The Lord will reward you a hundredfold! Old man, come with me, I beg! Old man! Why are you silent?"

"He is a bit simple," says the young man.

"You come with me, friend; I will give you five kopecks."

"For five kopecks I might," says the young man, scratching his head, "but I was told not to. If Syoma here, our simpleton, will stay alone, I will take you. Syoma, will you stay here alone?"

"I'll stay," the simpleton consents.

"Well, that's all right, then. Come along!" The young man gets up, and goes with the cassock. A minute later the sound of their steps and their talk dies away. Syoma shuts his eyes and gently dozes. The fire begins to grow dim, and a big black shadow falls on the dead body.

A HAPPY ENDING

LYUBOV GRIGORYEVNA, a substantial, buxom lady of forty who undertook matchmaking and many other matters of which it is usual to speak only in whispers, had come to see Stytkin, the head guard, on a day when he was off duty. Stytkin, somewhat embarrassed, but, as always, grave, practical, and severe, was walking up and down the room, smoking a cigar and saying:

"Very pleased to make your acquaintance. Semyon Ivanovitch recommended you on the ground that you may be able to assist me in a delicate and very important matter affecting the happiness of my life. I have, Lyubov Grigoryevna, reached the age of fifty-two; that is a period of life at which very many have already grown-up children. My position is a secure one. Though my fortune is not large, yet I am in a position to support a beloved being and children at my side. I may tell you between ourselves that apart from my salary I have also money in the bank which my manner of living has enabled me to save. I am a practical and sober man, I lead a sensible and consistent life, so that I may hold myself up as an example to many. But one thing I lack—a domestic hearth of my own and a partner in life, and I live like a wandering Magyar, moving from place to place without any satisfaction. I have no one with whom to take counsel, and when I am ill no one to give me water, and so on. Apart from that, Lyubov Grigoryevna, a married man has always more weight in society than a bachelor... I am a man of the educated class, with money, but if you look at me from a point of view, what am I? A man with no kith and kin, no better than some Polish priest. And therefore I should be very desirous to be united in the bonds of Hymen—that is, to enter into matrimony with some worthy person."

"An excellent thing," said the matchmaker, with a sigh.

"I am a solitary man and in this town I know no one. Where can I go, and to whom can I apply, since all the people here are strangers to me? That is why Semyon Ivanovitch advised me to address myself to a person who is a specialist in this line, and makes the arrangement of the happiness of others her profession. And therefore I most earnestly beg you, Lyubov Grigoryevna, to assist me in ordering my future. You know all the marriageable young ladies in the town, and it is easy for you to accommodate me."

"I can..."

"A glass of wine, I beg you..."

With an habitual gesture the matchmaker raised her glass to her mouth and tossed it off without winking.

"I can," she repeated. "And what sort of bride would you like, Nikolay Nikolayitch?"

"Should I like? The bride fate sends me."

"Well, of course it depends on your fate, but everyone has his own taste, you know. One likes dark ladies, the other prefers fair ones."

"You see, Lyubov Grigoryevna," said Stytkin, sighing sedately, "I am a practical man and a man of character; for me beauty and external appearance generally take a secondary place, for, as you know yourself, beauty is neither bowl nor platter, and a pretty wife involves a great deal of anxiety. The way I look at it is, what matters most in a woman is not what is external, but what lies within—that is, that she should have soul and all the qualities. A glass of wine, I beg... Of course, it would be very agreeable that one's wife should be rather plump, but for mutual happiness it is not of great consequence; what matters is the mind. Properly speaking, a woman does not need mind either, for if she has brains she will have too high an opinion of herself, and take all sorts of ideas into her head. One cannot do without education nowadays, of course, but education is of different kinds. It would be pleasing for one's wife to know French and German, to speak various languages, very pleasing; but what's the use of that if she can't sew on one's buttons, perhaps? I am a man of the educated class: I am just as much at home, I may say, with Prince Kanitelin as I am with you here now. But my habits are simple, and I want a girl who is not too much a fine lady. Above all, she must have respect for me and feel that I have made her happiness."

"To be sure."

"Well, now as regards the essential... I do not want a wealthy bride; I would never condescend to anything so low as to marry for money. I desire not to be kept by my wife, but to keep her, and that she may be sensible of it. But I do not want a poor girl either. Though I am a man of means, and am marrying not from mercenary motives, but from love, yet I cannot take a poor girl, for, as you know yourself, prices have gone up so, and there will be children."

"One might find one with a dowry," said the matchmaker.

"A glass of wine, I beg..."

There was a pause of five minutes.

The matchmaker heaved a sigh, took a sidelong glance at the guard, and asked:

"Well, now, my good sir... do you want anything in the bachelor line? I have some fine bargains. One is a French girl and one is a Greek. Well worth the money."

The guard thought a moment and said:

"No, I thank you. In view of your favourable disposition, allow me to enquire now how much you ask for your exertions in regard to a bride?"

"I don't ask much. Give me twenty-five roubles and the stuff for a dress, as is usual, and I will say thank you... but for the dowry, that's a different account."

Stytchkin folded his arms over his chest and fell to pondering in silence. After some thought he heaved a sigh and said:

"That's dear..."

"It's not at all dear, Nikolay Nikolayitch! In old days when there were lots of weddings one did do it cheaper, but nowadays what are our earnings? If you make fifty roubles in a month that is not a fast, you may be thankful. It's not on weddings we make our money, my good sir."

Stytchkin looked at the matchmaker in amazement and shrugged his shoulders.

"H'm!... Do you call fifty roubles little?" he asked.

"Of course it is little! In old days we sometimes made more than a hundred."

"H'm! I should never have thought it was possible to earn such a sum by these jobs. Fifty roubles! It is not every man that earns as much! Pray drink your wine..."

The matchmaker drained her glass without winking. Stytchkin looked her over from head to foot in silence, then said:

"Fifty roubles... Why, that is six hundred roubles a year..."

Please take some more... With such dividends, you know, Lyubov Grigoryevna, you would have no difficulty in making a match for yourself..."

"For myself," laughed the matchmaker, "I am an old woman."

"Not at all... You have such a figure, and your face is plump and fair, and all the rest of it."

The matchmaker was embarrassed. Stytchkin was also embarrassed and sat down beside her.

"You are still very attractive," said he; "if you met with a practical, steady, careful husband, with his salary and your earnings you might even attract him very much, and you'd get on very well together..."

"Goodness knows what you are saying, Nikolay Nikolayitch."

"Well, I meant no harm..."

A silence followed. Stychkin began loudly blowing his nose, while the matchmaker turned crimson, and looking bashfully at him, asked:

"And how much do you get, Nikolay Nikolayitch?"

"I? Seventy-five roubles, besides tips... Apart from that we make something out of candles and hares."

"You go hunting, then?"

"No. Passengers who travel without tickets are called hares with us."

Another minute passed in silence. Stychkin got up and walked about the room in excitement.

"I don't want a young wife," said he. "I am a middle-aged man, and I want someone who... as it might be like you... staid and settled and a figure something like yours..."

"Goodness knows what you are saying..." giggled the matchmaker, hiding her crimson face in her kerchief.

"There is no need to be long thinking about it. You are after my own heart, and you suit me in your qualities. I am a practical, sober man, and if you like me... what could be better? Allow me to make you a proposal!"

The matchmaker dropped a tear, laughed, and, in token of her consent, clinked glasses with Stychkin.

"Well," said the happy railway guard, "now allow me to explain to you the behaviour and manner of life I desire from you... I am a strict, respectable, practical man. I take a gentlemanly view of everything. And I desire that my wife should be strict also, and should understand that to her I am a benefactor and the foremost person in the world."

He sat down, and, heaving a deep sigh, began expounding to his bride-elect his views on domestic life and a wife's duties.

THE LOOKING-GLASS

NEW YEAR'S EVE. Nellie, the daughter of a landowner and general, a young and pretty girl, dreaming day and night of being married, was sitting in her room, gazing with exhausted, half-closed eyes into the looking-glass. She was pale, tense, and as motionless as the looking-glass.

The non-existent but apparent vista of a long, narrow corridor with endless rows of candles, the reflection of her face, her hands, of the frame—all this was already clouded in mist and merged into a boundless grey sea. The sea was undulating, gleaming and now and then flaring crimson...

Looking at Nellie's motionless eyes and parted lips, one could hardly say whether she was asleep or awake, but nevertheless she was seeing. At first she saw only the smile and soft, charming expression of someone's eyes, then against the shifting grey background there gradually appeared the outlines of a head, a face, eyebrows, beard. It was he, the destined one, the object of long dreams and hopes. The destined one was for Nellie everything, the significance of life, personal happiness, career, fate. Outside him, as on the grey background of the looking-glass, all was dark, empty, meaningless. And so it was not strange that, seeing before her a handsome, gently smiling face, she was conscious of bliss, of an unutterably sweet dream that could not be expressed in speech or on paper. Then she heard his voice, saw herself living under the same roof with him, her life merged into his. Months and years flew by against the grey background. And Nellie saw her future distinctly in all its details.

Picture followed picture against the grey background. Now Nellie saw herself one winter night knocking at the door of Stepan Lukitch, the district doctor. The old dog hoarsely and lazily barked behind the gate. The doctor's windows were in darkness. All was silence.

"For God's sake, for God's sake!" whispered Nellie.

But at last the garden gate creaked and Nellie saw the doctor's cook.

"Is the doctor at home?"

"His honour's asleep," whispered the cook into her sleeve, as though afraid of waking her master.

"He's only just got home from his fever patients, and gave orders he was not to be waked."

But Nellie scarcely heard the cook. Thrusting her aside, she rushed

headlong into the doctor's house. Running through some dark and stuffy rooms, upsetting two or three chairs, she at last reached the doctor's bedroom. Stepan Lukitch was lying on his bed, dressed, but without his coat, and with pouting lips was breathing into his open hand. A little night-light glimmered faintly beside him. Without uttering a word Nellie sat down and began to cry. She wept bitterly, shaking all over.

"My husband is ill!" she sobbed out. Stepan Lukitch was silent. He slowly sat up, propped his head on his hand, and looked at his visitor with fixed, sleepy eyes. "My husband is ill!" Nellie continued, restraining her sobs. "For mercy's sake come quickly. Make haste... Make haste!"

"Eh?" growled the doctor, blowing into his hand.

"Come! Come this very minute! Or... it's terrible to think! For mercy's sake!"

And pale, exhausted Nellie, gasping and swallowing her tears, began describing to the doctor her husband's illness, her unutterable terror. Her sufferings would have touched the heart of a stone, but the doctor looked at her, blew into his open hand, and-not a movement.

"I'll come to-morrow!" he muttered.

"That's impossible!" cried Nellie. "I know my husband has typhus! At once... this very minute you are needed!"

"I... er... have only just come in," muttered the doctor.

"For the last three days I've been away, seeing typhus patients, and I'm exhausted and ill myself... I simply can't! Absolutely! I've caught it myself! There!"

And the doctor thrust before her eyes a clinical thermometer.

"My temperature is nearly forty... I absolutely can't. I can scarcely sit up. Excuse me. I'll lie down..."

The doctor lay down.

"But I implore you, doctor," Nellie moaned in despair. "I beseech you! Help me, for mercy's sake! Make a great effort and come! I will repay you, doctor!"

"Oh, dear!... Why, I have told you already. Ah!"

Nellie leapt up and walked nervously up and down the bedroom. She longed to explain to the doctor, to bring him to reason... She thought if only he knew how dear her husband was to her and how unhappy she was, he would forget his exhaustion and his illness. But how could she be eloquent enough?

"Go to the Zemstvo doctor," she heard Stepan Lukitch's voice.

"That's impossible! He lives more than twenty miles from here, and time is precious. And the horses can't stand it. It is thirty miles from us to you, and as much from here to the Zemstvo doctor. No, it's impossible! Come along, Stepan Lukitch. I ask of you an heroic deed. Come, perform that heroic deed! Have pity on us!"

"It's beyond everything... I'm in a fever... my head's in a whirl... and she won't understand! Leave me alone!"

"But you are in duty bound to come! You cannot refuse to come! It's egoism! A man is bound to sacrifice his life for his neighbour, and you... you refuse to come! I will summon you before the Court."

Nellie felt that she was uttering a false and undeserved insult, but for her husband's sake she was capable of forgetting logic, tact, sympathy for others... In reply to her threats, the doctor greedily gulped a glass of cold water. Nellie fell to entreating and imploring like the very lowest beggar... At last the doctor gave way. He slowly got up, puffing and panting, looking for his coat.

"Here it is!" cried Nellie, helping him. "Let me put it on to you. Come along! I will repay you... All my life I shall be grateful to you..."

But what agony! After putting on his coat the doctor lay down again. Nellie got him up and dragged him to the hall. Then there was an agonizing to-do over his goloshes, his overcoat... His cap was lost... But at last Nellie was in the carriage with the doctor. Now they had only to drive thirty miles and her husband would have a doctor's help. The earth was wrapped in darkness. One could not see one's hand before one's face... A cold winter wind was blowing. There were frozen lumps under their wheels. The coachman was continually stopping and wondering which road to take.

Nellie and the doctor sat silent all the way. It was fearfully jolting, but they felt neither the cold nor the jolts.

"Get on, get on!" Nellie implored the driver.

At five in the morning the exhausted horses drove into the yard. Nellie saw the familiar gates, the well with the crane, the long row of stables and barns. At last she was at home.

"Wait a moment, I will be back directly," she said to Stepan Lukitch, making him sit down on the sofa in the dining-room. "Sit still and wait a little, and I'll see how he is going on."

On her return from her husband, Nellie found the doctor lying down.

He was lying on the sofa and muttering.

"Doctor, please!... doctor!"

"Eh? Ask Domna!" muttered Stepan Lukitch.

"What?"

"They said at the meeting... Vlassov said... Who?... what?"

And to her horror Nellie saw that the doctor was as delirious as her husband. What was to be done?

"I must go for the Zemstvo doctor," she decided.

Then again there followed darkness, a cutting cold wind, lumps of frozen earth. She was suffering in body and in soul, and delusive nature has no arts, no deceptions to compensate these sufferings...

Then she saw against the grey background how her husband every spring was in straits for money to pay the interest for the mortgage to the bank. He could not sleep, she could not sleep, and both racked their brains till their heads ached, thinking how to avoid being visited by the clerk of the Court.

She saw her children: the everlasting apprehension of colds, scarlet fever, diphtheria, bad marks at school, separation. Out of a brood of five or six one was sure to die.

The grey background was not untouched by death. That might well be. A husband and wife cannot die simultaneously. Whatever happened one must bury the other. And Nellie saw her husband dying. This terrible event presented itself to her in every detail. She saw the coffin, the candles, the deacon, and even the footmarks in the hall made by the undertaker.

"Why is it, what is it for?" she asked, looking blankly at her husband's face.

And all the previous life with her husband seemed to her a stupid prelude to this.

Something fell from Nellie's hand and knocked on the floor. She started, jumped up, and opened her eyes wide. One looking-glass she saw lying at her feet. The other was standing as before on the table.

She looked into the looking-glass and saw a pale, tear-stained face.

There was no grey background now.

"I must have fallen asleep," she thought with a sigh of relief.

OLD AGE

UZELKOV, an architect with the rank of civil councillor, arrived in his native town, to which he had been invited to restore the church in the cemetery. He had been born in the town, had been at school, had grown up and married in it. But when he got out of the train he scarcely recognized it. Everything was changed... Eighteen years ago when he had moved to Petersburg the street-boys used to catch marmots, for instance, on the spot where now the station was standing; now when one drove into the chief street, a hotel of four storeys stood facing one; in old days there was an ugly grey fence just there; but nothing-neither fences nor houses-had changed as much as the people. From his enquiries of the hotel waiter Uzelkov learned that more than half of the people he remembered were dead, reduced to poverty, forgotten.

"And do you remember Uzelkov?" he asked the old waiter about himself. "Uzelkov the architect who divorced his wife? He used to have a house in Svirebeyevesky Street... you must remember."

"I don't remember, sir."

"How is it you don't remember? The case made a lot of noise, even the cabmen all knew about it. Think, now! Shapkin the attorney managed my divorce for me, the rascal... the notorious cardsharp, the fellow who got a thrashing at the club..."

"Ivan Nikolaitch?"

"Yes, yes... Well, is he alive? Is he dead?"

"Alive, sir, thank God. He is a notary now and has an office. He is very well off. He has two houses in Kirpitchny Street... His daughter was married the other day."

Uzelkov paced up and down the room, thought a bit, and in his boredom made up his mind to go and see Shapkin at his office. When he walked out of the hotel and sauntered slowly towards Kirpitchny Street it was midday. He found Shapkin at his office and scarcely recognized him. From the once well-made, adroit attorney with a mobile, insolent, and always drunken face Shapkin had changed into a modest, grey-headed, decrepit old man.

"You don't recognize me, you have forgotten me," began Uzelkov. "I am your old client, Uzelkov."

"Uzelkov, what Uzelkov? Ah!" Shapkin remembered, recognized, and

was struck all of a heap. There followed a shower of exclamations, questions, recollections.

"This is a surprise! This is unexpected!" cackled Shapkin. "What can I offer you? Do you care for champagne? Perhaps you would like oysters? My dear fellow, I have had so much from you in my time that I can't offer you anything equal to the occasion..."

"Please don't put yourself out..." said Uzelkov. "I have no time to spare. I must go at once to the cemetery and examine the church; I have undertaken the restoration of it."

"That's capital! We'll have a snack and a drink and drive together. I have capital horses. I'll take you there and introduce you to the church-warden; I will arrange it all... But why is it, my angel, you seem to be afraid of me and hold me at arm's length? Sit a little nearer! There is no need for you to be afraid of me nowadays. He-he!... At one time, it is true, I was a cunning blade, a dog of a fellow... no one dared approach me; but now I am stiller than water and humbler than the grass. I have grown old, I am a family man, I have children. It's time I was dead."

The friends had lunch, had a drink, and with a pair of horses drove out of the town to the cemetery.

"Yes, those were times!" Shapkin recalled as he sat in the sledge. "When you remember them you simply can't believe in them. Do you remember how you divorced your wife? It's nearly twenty years ago, and I dare say you have forgotten it all; but I remember it as though I'd divorced you yesterday. Good Lord, what a lot of worry I had over it! I was a sharp fellow, tricky and cunning, a desperate character... Sometimes I was burning to tackle some ticklish business, especially if the fee were a good one, as, for instance, in your case. What did you pay me then? Five or six thousand! That was worth taking trouble for, wasn't it? You went off to Petersburg and left the whole thing in my hands to do the best I could, and, though Sofya Mihailovna, your wife, came only of a merchant family, she was proud and dignified. To bribe her to take the guilt on herself was difficult, awfully difficult! I would go to negotiate with her, and as soon as she saw me she called to her maid: 'Masha, didn't I tell you not to admit that scoundrel?' Well, I tried one thing and another... I wrote her letters and contrived to meet her accidentally-it was no use! I had to act through a third person. I had a lot of trouble with her for a long time, and she only gave in when you agreed to give her ten thousand... She couldn't resist ten thousand, she couldn't hold out... She cried, she spat in

my face, but she consented, she took the guilt on herself!"

"I thought it was fifteen thousand she had from me, not ten," said Uzelkov.

"Yes, yes... fifteen-I made a mistake," said Shapkin in confusion. "It's all over and done with, though, it's no use concealing it. I gave her ten and the other five I collared for myself. I deceived you both... It's all over and done with, it's no use to be ashamed. And indeed, judge for yourself, Boris Petrovitch, weren't you the very person for me to get money out of?... You were a wealthy man and had everything you wanted... Your marriage was an idle whim, and so was your divorce. You were making a lot of money... I remember you made a scoop of twenty thousand over one contract. Whom should I have fleeced if not you? And I must own I envied you. If you grabbed anything they took off their caps to you, while they would thrash me for a rouble and slap me in the face at the club... But there, why recall it? It is high time to forget it."

"Tell me, please, how did Sofya Mihailovna get on afterwards?"

"With her ten thousand? Very badly. God knows what it was-she lost her head, perhaps, or maybe her pride and her conscience tormented her at having sold her honour, or perhaps she loved you; but, do you know, she took to drink... As soon as she got her money she was off driving about with officers. It was drunkenness, dissipation, debauchery... When she went to a restaurant with officers she was not content with port or anything light, she must have strong brandy, fiery stuff to stupefy her."

"Yes, she was eccentric... I had a lot to put up with from her... sometimes she would take offence at something and begin being hysterical... And what happened afterwards?"

"One week passed and then another... I was sitting at home, writing something. All at once the door opened and she walked in... drunk. 'Take back your cursed money,' she said, and flung a roll of notes in my face... So she could not keep it up. I picked up the notes and counted them. It was five hundred short of the ten thousand, so she had only managed to get through five hundred."

"Where did you put the money?"

"It's all ancient history... there's no reason to conceal it now... In my pocket, of course. Why do you look at me like that? Wait a bit for what will come later... It's a regular novel, a pathological study. A couple of months later I was going home one night in a nasty drunken condition... I lighted a

candle, and lo and behold! Sofya Mihailovna was sitting on my sofa, and she was drunk, too, and in a frantic state-as wild as though she had run out of Bedlam. 'Give me back my money,' she said, 'I have changed my mind; if I must go to ruin I won't do it by halves, I'll have my fling! Be quick, you scoundrel, give me my money!' A disgraceful scene!"

"And you... gave it her?"

"I gave her, I remember, ten roubles."

"Oh! How could you?" cried Uzelkov, frowning. "If you couldn't or wouldn't have given it her, you might have written to me... And I didn't know! I didn't know!"

"My dear fellow, what use would it have been for me to write, considering that she wrote to you herself when she was lying in the hospital afterwards?"

"Yes, but I was so taken up then with my second marriage. I was in such a whirl that I had no thoughts to spare for letters... But you were an outsider, you had no antipathy for Sofya... why didn't you give her a helping hand?..."

"You can't judge by the standards of to-day, Boris Petrovitch; that's how we look at it now, but at the time we thought very differently... Now maybe I'd give her a thousand roubles, but then even that ten-rouble note I did not give her for nothing. It was a bad business!... We must forget it... But here we are..."

The sledge stopped at the cemetery gates. Uzelkov and Shapkin got out of the sledge, went in at the gate, and walked up a long, broad avenue. The bare cherry-trees and acacias, the grey crosses and tombstones, were silvered with hoar-frost, every little grain of snow reflected the bright, sunny day. There was the smell there always is in cemeteries, the smell of incense and freshly dug earth...

"Our cemetery is a pretty one," said Uzelkov, "quite a garden!"

"Yes, but it is a pity thieves steal the tombstones... And over there, beyond that iron monument on the right, Sofya Mihailovna is buried. Would you like to see?"

The friends turned to the right and walked through the deep snow to the iron monument.

"Here it is," said Shapkin, pointing to a little slab of white marble. "A lieutenant put the stone on her grave."

Uzelkov slowly took off his cap and exposed his bald head to the sun. Shapkin, looking at him, took off his cap too, and another bald patch gleamed

in the sunlight. There was the stillness of the tomb all around as though the air, too, were dead. The friends looked at the grave, pondered, and said nothing.

"She sleeps in peace," said Shapkin, breaking the silence. "It's nothing to her now that she took the blame on herself and drank brandy. You must own, Boris Petrovitch..."

"Own what?" Uzelkov asked gloomily.

"Why... However hateful the past, it was better than this."

And Shapkin pointed to his grey head.

"I used not to think of the hour of death... I fancied I could have given death points and won the game if we had had an encounter; but now... But what's the good of talking!"

Uzelkov was overcome with melancholy. He suddenly had a passionate longing to weep, as once he had longed for love, and he felt those tears would have tasted sweet and refreshing. A moisture came into his eyes and there was a lump in his throat, but... Shapkin was standing beside him and Uzelkov was ashamed to show weakness before a witness. He turned back abruptly and went into the church.

Only two hours later, after talking to the churchwarden and looking over the church, he seized a moment when Shapkin was in conversation with the priest and hastened away to weep... He stole up to the grave secretly, furtively, looking round him every minute. The little white slab looked at him pensively, mournfully, and innocently as though a little girl lay under it instead of a dissolute, divorced wife.

"To weep, to weep!" thought Uzelkov.

But the moment for tears had been missed; though the old man blinked his eyes, though he worked up his feelings, the tears did not flow nor the lump come in his throat. After standing for ten minutes, with a gesture of despair, Uzelkov went to look for Shapkin.

DARKNESS

A YOUNG peasant, with white eyebrows and eyelashes and broad cheekbones, in a torn sheepskin and big black felt overboots, waited till the Zemstvo doctor had finished seeing his patients and came out to go home from the hospital; then he went up to him, diffidently.

"Please, your honour," he said.

"What do you want?"

The young man passed the palm of his hand up and over his nose, looked at the sky, and then answered:

"Please, your honour... You've got my brother Vaska the blacksmith from Varvarino in the convict ward here, your honour..."

"Yes, what then?"

"I am Vaska's brother, you see... Father has the two of us: him, Vaska, and me, Kirila; besides us there are three sisters, and Vaska's a married man with a little one... There are a lot of us and no one to work... In the smithy it's nearly two years now since the forge has been heated. I am at the cotton factory, I can't do smith's work, and how can father work? Let alone work, he can't eat properly, he can't lift the spoon to his mouth."

"What do you want from me?"

"Be merciful! Let Vaska go!"

The doctor looked wonderingly at Kirila, and without saying a word walked on. The young peasant ran on in front and flung himself in a heap at his feet.

"Doctor, kind gentleman!" he besought him, blinking and again passing his open hand over his nose. "Show heavenly mercy; let Vaska go home! We shall remember you in our prayers for ever! Your honour, let him go! They are all starving! Mother's wailing day in, day out, Vaska's wife's wailing... it's worse than death! I don't care to look upon the light of day. Be merciful; let him go, kind gentleman!"

"Are you stupid or out of your senses?" asked the doctor angrily.

"How can I let him go? Why, he is a convict."

Kirila began crying. "Let him go!"

"Tfoo, queer fellow! What right have I? Am I a gaoler or what? They brought him to the hospital for me to treat him, but I have as much right to let him out as I have to put you in prison, silly fellow!"

"But they have shut him up for nothing! He was in prison a year before the trial, and now there is no saying what he is there for. It would have been a different thing if he had murdered someone, let us say, or stolen horses; but as it is, what is it all about?"

"Very likely, but how do I come in?"

"They shut a man up and they don't know themselves what for. He was drunk, your honour, did not know what he was doing, and even hit father on the ear and scratched his own cheek on a branch, and two of our fellows-they wanted some Turkish tobacco, you see-began telling him to go with them and break into the Armenian's shop at night for tobacco. Being drunk, he obeyed them, the fool. They broke the lock, you know, got in, and did no end of mischief; they turned everything upside down, broke the windows, and scattered the flour about. They were drunk, that is all one can say! Well, the constable turned up... and with one thing and another they took them off to the magistrate. They have been a whole year in prison, and a week ago, on the Wednesday, they were all three tried in the town. A soldier stood behind them with a gun... people were sworn in. Vaska was less to blame than any, but the gentry decided that he was the ringleader. The other two lads were sent to prison, but Vaska to a convict battalion for three years. And what for? One should judge like a Christian!"

"I have nothing to do with it, I tell you again. Go to the authorities."

"I have been already! I've been to the court; I have tried to send in a petition-they wouldn't take a petition; I have been to the police captain, and I have been to the examining magistrate, and everyone says, 'It is not my business!' Whose business is it, then? But there is no one above you here in the hospital; you do what you like, your honour."

"You simpleton," sighed the doctor, "once the jury have found him guilty, not the governor, not even the minister, could do anything, let alone the police captain. It's no good your trying to do anything!"

"And who judged him, then?"

"The gentlemen of the jury..."

"They weren't gentlemen, they were our peasants! Andrey Guryev was one; Aloshka Huk was one."

"Well, I am cold talking to you..."

The doctor waved his hand and walked quickly to his own door. Kirila was on the point of following him, but, seeing the door slam, he stopped.

For ten minutes he stood motionless in the middle of the hospital yard,

and without putting on his cap stared at the doctor's house, then he heaved a deep sigh, slowly scratched himself, and walked towards the gate.

"To whom am I to go?" he muttered as he came out on to the road. "One says it is not his business, another says it is not his business. Whose business is it, then? No, till you grease their hands you will get nothing out of them. The doctor says that, but he keeps looking all the while at my fist to see whether I am going to give him a blue note. Well, brother, I'll go, if it has to be to the governor."

Shifting from one foot to the other and continually looking round him in an objectless way, he trudged lazily along the road and was apparently wondering where to go... It was not cold and the snow faintly crunched under his feet. Not more than half a mile in front of him the wretched little district town in which his brother had just been tried lay outstretched on the hill. On the right was the dark prison with its red roof and sentry-boxes at the corners; on the left was the big town copse, now covered with hoar-frost. It was still; only an old man, wearing a woman's short jacket and a huge cap, was walking ahead, coughing and shouting to a cow which he was driving to the town.

"Good-day, grandfather," said Kirila, overtaking him.

"Good-day..."

"Are you driving it to the market?"

"No," the old man answered lazily.

"Are you a townsman?"

They got into conversation; Kirila told him what he had come to the hospital for, and what he had been talking about to the doctor.

"The doctor does not know anything about such matters, that is a sure thing," the old man said to him as they were both entering the town; "though he is a gentleman, he is only taught to cure by every means, but to give you real advice, or, let us say, write out a petition for you-that he cannot do. There are special authorities to do that. You have been to the justice of the peace and to the police captain-they are no good for your business either."

"Where am I to go?"

"The permanent member of the rural board is the chief person for peasants' affairs. Go to him, Mr. Sineokov."

"The one who is at Zolotovo?"

"Why, yes, at Zolotovo. He is your chief man. If it is anything that has to do with you peasants even the police captain has no authority against him."

"It's a long way to go, old man... I dare say it's twelve miles and may be more."

"One who needs something will go seventy."

"That is so... Should I send in a petition to him, or what?"

"You will find out there. If you should have a petition the clerk will write you one quick enough. The permanent member has a clerk."

After parting from the old man Kirila stood still in the middle of the square, thought a little, and walked back out of the town. He made up his mind to go to Zolotovo.

Five days later, as the doctor was on his way home after seeing his patients, he caught sight of Kirila again in his yard. This time the young peasant was not alone, but with a gaunt, very pale old man who nodded his head without ceasing, like a pendulum, and mumbled with his lips.

"Your honour, I have come again to ask your gracious mercy," began Kirila. "Here I have come with my father. Be merciful, let Vaska go! The permanent member would not talk to me. He said: 'Go away!'"

"Your honour," the old man hissed in his throat, raising his twitching eyebrows, "be merciful! We are poor people, we cannot repay your honour, but if you graciously please, Kiryushka or Vaska can repay you in work. Let them work."

"We will pay with work," said Kirila, and he raised his hand above his head as though he would take an oath. "Let him go! They are starving, they are crying day and night, your honour!"

The young peasant bent a rapid glance on his father, pulled him by the sleeve, and both of them, as at the word of command, fell at the doctor's feet. The latter waved his hand in despair, and, without looking round, walked quickly in at his door.

THE BEGGAR

"KIND sir, be so good as to notice a poor, hungry man. I have not tasted food for three days. I have not a five-kopeck piece for a night's lodging. I swear by God! For five years I was a village schoolmaster and lost my post through the intrigues of the Zemstvo. I was the victim of false witness. I have been out of a place for a year now."

Skvortsov, a Petersburg lawyer, looked at the speaker's tattered dark blue overcoat, at his muddy, drunken eyes, at the red patches on his cheeks, and it seemed to him that he had seen the man before.

"And now I am offered a post in the Kaluga province," the beggar continued, "but I have not the means for the journey there. Graciously help me! I am ashamed to ask, but... I am compelled by circumstances."

Skvortsov looked at his goloshes, of which one was shallow like a shoe, while the other came high up the leg like a boot, and suddenly remembered.

"Listen, the day before yesterday I met you in Sadovoy Street," he said, "and then you told me, not that you were a village schoolmaster, but that you were a student who had been expelled. Do you remember?"

"N-o. No, that cannot be so!" the beggar muttered in confusion. "I am a village schoolmaster, and if you wish it I can show you documents to prove it."

"That's enough lies! You called yourself a student, and even told me what you were expelled for. Do you remember?"

Skvortsov flushed, and with a look of disgust on his face turned away from the ragged figure.

"It's contemptible, sir!" he cried angrily. "It's a swindle! I'll hand you over to the police, damn you! You are poor and hungry, but that does not give you the right to lie so shamelessly!"

The ragged figure took hold of the door-handle and, like a bird in a snare, looked round the hall desperately.

"I... I am not lying," he muttered. "I can show documents."

"Who can believe you?" Skvortsov went on, still indignant. "To exploit the sympathy of the public for village schoolmasters and students-it's so low, so mean, so dirty! It's revolting!"

Skvortsov flew into a rage and gave the beggar a merciless scolding. The ragged fellow's insolent lying aroused his disgust and aversion, was an

offence against what he, Skvortsov, loved and prized in himself: kindness, a feeling heart, sympathy for the unhappy. By his lying, by his treacherous assault upon compassion, the individual had, as it were, defiled the charity which he liked to give to the poor with no misgivings in his heart. The beggar at first defended himself, protested with oaths, then he sank into silence and hung his head, overcome with shame.

"Sir!" he said, laying his hand on his heart, "I really was... lying! I am not a student and not a village schoolmaster. All that's mere invention! I used to be in the Russian choir, and I was turned out of it for drunkenness. But what can I do? Believe me, in God's name, I can't get on without lying-when I tell the truth no one will give me anything. With the truth one may die of hunger and freeze without a night's lodging! What you say is true, I understand that, but... what am I to do?"

"What are you to do? You ask what are you to do?" cried Skvortsov, going close up to him. "Work-that's what you must do! You must work!"

"Work... I know that myself, but where can I get work?"

"Nonsense. You are young, strong, and healthy, and could always find work if you wanted to. But you know you are lazy, pampered, drunken! You reek of vodka like a pothouse! You have become false and corrupt to the marrow of your bones and fit for nothing but begging and lying! If you do graciously condescend to take work, you must have a job in an office, in the Russian choir, or as a billiard-marker, where you will have a salary and have nothing to do! But how would you like to undertake manual labour? I'll be bound, you wouldn't be a house porter or a factory hand! You are too genteel for that!"

"What things you say, really..." said the beggar, and he gave a bitter smile. "How can I get manual work? It's rather late for me to be a shopman, for in trade one has to begin from a boy; no one would take me as a house porter, because I am not of that class... And I could not get work in a factory; one must know a trade, and I know nothing."

"Nonsense! You always find some justification! Wouldn't you like to chop wood?"

"I would not refuse to, but the regular woodchoppers are out of work now."

"Oh, all idlers argue like that! As soon as you are offered anything you refuse it. Would you care to chop wood for me?"

"Certainly I will..."

"Very good, we shall see... Excellent. We'll see!" Skvortsov, in nervous haste; and not without malignant pleasure, rubbing his hands, summoned his cook from the kitchen.

"Here, Olga," he said to her, "take this gentleman to the shed and let him chop some wood."

The beggar shrugged his shoulders as though puzzled, and irresolutely followed the cook. It was evident from his demeanour that he had consented to go and chop wood, not because he was hungry and wanted to earn money, but simply from shame and *amour propre*, because he had been taken at his word. It was clear, too, that he was suffering from the effects of vodka, that he was unwell, and felt not the faintest inclination to work.

Skvortsov hurried into the dining-room. There from the window which looked out into the yard he could see the woodshed and everything that happened in the yard. Standing at the window, Skvortsov saw the cook and the beggar come by the back way into the yard and go through the muddy snow to the woodshed. Olga scrutinized her companion angrily, and jerking her elbow unlocked the woodshed and angrily banged the door open.

"Most likely we interrupted the woman drinking her coffee," thought Skvortsov. "What a cross creature she is!"

Then he saw the pseudo-schoolmaster and pseudo-student seat himself on a block of wood, and, leaning his red cheeks upon his fists, sink into thought. The cook flung an axe at his feet, spat angrily on the ground, and, judging by the expression of her lips, began abusing him. The beggar drew a log of wood towards him irresolutely, set it up between his feet, and diffidently drew the axe across it. The log toppled and fell over. The beggar drew it towards him, breathed on his frozen hands, and again drew the axe along it as cautiously as though he were afraid of its hitting his golosh or chopping off his fingers. The log fell over again.

Skvortsov's wrath had passed off by now, he felt sore and ashamed at the thought that he had forced a pampered, drunken, and perhaps sick man to do hard, rough work in the cold.

"Never mind, let him go on..." he thought, going from the dining-room into his study. "I am doing it for his good!"

An hour later Olga appeared and announced that the wood had been chopped up.

"Here, give him half a rouble," said Skvortsov. "If he likes, let him come and chop wood on the first of every month... There will always be work for

him."

On the first of the month the beggar turned up and again earned half a rouble, though he could hardly stand. From that time forward he took to turning up frequently, and work was always found for him: sometimes he would sweep the snow into heaps, or clear up the shed, at another he used to beat the rugs and the mattresses. He always received thirty to forty kopecks for his work, and on one occasion an old pair of trousers was sent out to him.

When he moved, Skvortsov engaged him to assist in packing and moving the furniture. On this occasion the beggar was sober, gloomy, and silent; he scarcely touched the furniture, walked with hanging head behind the furniture vans, and did not even try to appear busy; he merely shivered with the cold, and was overcome with confusion when the men with the vans laughed at his idleness, feebleness, and ragged coat that had once been a gentleman's. After the removal Skvortsov sent for him.

"Well, I see my words have had an effect upon you," he said, giving him a rouble. "This is for your work. I see that you are sober and not disinclined to work. What is your name?"

"Lushkov."

"I can offer you better work, not so rough, Lushkov. Can you write?"

"Yes, sir."

"Then go with this note to-morrow to my colleague and he will give you some copying to do. Work, don't drink, and don't forget what I said to you. Good-bye."

Skvortsov, pleased that he had put a man in the path of rectitude, patted Lushkov genially on the shoulder, and even shook hands with him at parting.

Lushkov took the letter, departed, and from that time forward did not come to the back-yard for work.

Two years passed. One day as Skvortsov was standing at the ticket-office of a theatre, paying for his ticket, he saw beside him a little man with a lambskin collar and a shabby cat's-skin cap. The man timidly asked the clerk for a gallery ticket and paid for it with kopecks.

"Lushkov, is it you?" asked Skvortsov, recognizing in the little man his former woodchopper. "Well, what are you doing? Are you getting on all right?"

"Pretty well... I am in a notary's office now. I earn thirty-five roubles."

"Well, thank God, that's capital. I rejoice for you. I am very, very glad, Lushkov. You know, in a way, you are my godson. It was I who shoved you

into the right way. Do you remember what a scolding I gave you, eh? You almost sank through the floor that time. Well, thank you, my dear fellow, for remembering my words."

"Thank you too," said Lushkov. "If I had not come to you that day, maybe I should be calling myself a schoolmaster or a student still. Yes, in your house I was saved, and climbed out of the pit."

"I am very, very glad."

"Thank you for your kind words and deeds. What you said that day was excellent. I am grateful to you and to your cook, God bless that kind, noble-hearted woman. What you said that day was excellent; I am indebted to you as long as I live, of course, but it was your cook, Olga, who really saved me."

"How was that?"

"Why, it was like this. I used to come to you to chop wood and she would begin: 'Ah, you drunkard! You God-forsaken man! And yet death does not take you!' and then she would sit opposite me, lamenting, looking into my face and wailing: 'You unlucky fellow! You have no gladness in this world, and in the next you will burn in hell, poor drunkard! You poor sorrowful creature!' and she always went on in that style, you know. How often she upset herself, and how many tears she shed over me I can't tell you. But what affected me most-she chopped the wood for me! Do you know, sir, I never chopped a single log for you-she did it all! How it was she saved me, how it was I changed, looking at her, and gave up drinking, I can't explain. I only know that what she said and the noble way she behaved brought about a change in my soul, and I shall never forget it. It's time to go up, though, they are just going to ring the bell."

Lushkov bowed and went off to the gallery.

IN TROUBLE

PYOTR SEMYONITCH, the bank manager, together with the book-keeper, his assistant, and two members of the board, were taken in the night to prison. The day after the upheaval the merchant Avdeyev, who was one of the committee of auditors, was sitting with his friends in the shop saying:

"So it is God's will, it seems. There is no escaping your fate.

Here to-day we are eating caviare and to-morrow, for aught we know, it will be prison, beggary, or maybe death. Anything may happen.

Take Pyotr Semyonitch, for instance..."

He spoke, screwing up his drunken eyes, while his friends went on drinking, eating caviare, and listening. Having described the disgrace and helplessness of Pyotr Semyonitch, who only the day before had been powerful and respected by all, Avdeyev went on with a sigh:

"The tears of the mouse come back to the cat. Serve them right, the scoundrels! They could steal, the rooks, so let them answer for it!"

"You'd better look out, Ivan Danilitch, that you don't catch it too!" one of his friends observed.

"What has it to do with me?"

"Why, they were stealing, and what were you auditors thinking about?

I'll be bound, you signed the audit."

"It's all very well to talk!" laughed Avdeyev: "Signed it, indeed! They used to bring the accounts to my shop and I signed them. As though I understood! Give me anything you like, I'll scrawl my name to it. If you were to write that I murdered someone I'd sign my name to it. I haven't time to go into it; besides, I can't see without my spectacles."

After discussing the failure of the bank and the fate of Pyotr Semyonitch, Avdeyev and his friends went to eat pie at the house of a friend whose wife was celebrating her name-day. At the name-day party everyone was discussing the bank failure. Avdeyev was more excited than anyone, and declared that he had long foreseen the crash and knew two years before that things were not quite right at the bank. While they were eating pie he described a dozen illegal operations which had come to his knowledge.

"If you knew, why did you not give information?" asked an officer who was present.

"I wasn't the only one: the whole town knew of it," laughed Avdeyev.

"Besides, I haven't the time to hang about the law courts, damn them!"

He had a nap after the pie and then had dinner, then had another nap, then went to the evening service at the church of which he was a warden; after the service he went back to the name-day party and played preference till midnight. Everything seemed satisfactory.

But when Avdeyev hurried home after midnight the cook, who opened the door to him, looked pale, and was trembling so violently that she could not utter a word. His wife, Elizaveta Trofimovna, a flabby, overfed woman, with her grey hair hanging loose, was sitting on the sofa in the drawing-room quivering all over, and vacantly rolling her eyes as though she were drunk. Her elder son, Vassily, a high-school boy, pale too, and extremely agitated, was fussing round her with a glass of water.

"What's the matter?" asked Avdeyev, and looked angrily sideways at the stove (his family was constantly being upset by the fumes from it).

"The examining magistrate has just been with the police," answered Vassily; "they've made a search."

Avdeyev looked round him. The cupboards, the chests, the tables—everything bore traces of the recent search. For a minute Avdeyev stood motionless as though petrified, unable to understand; then his whole inside quivered and seemed to grow heavy, his left leg went numb, and, unable to endure his trembling, he lay down flat on the sofa. He felt his inside heaving and his rebellious left leg tapping against the back of the sofa.

In the course of two or three minutes he recalled the whole of his past, but could not remember any crime deserving of the attention of the police.

"It's all nonsense," he said, getting up. "They must have slandered me. To-morrow I must lodge a complaint of their having dared to do such a thing."

Next morning after a sleepless night Avdeyev, as usual, went to his shop. His customers brought him the news that during the night the public prosecutor had sent the deputy manager and the head-clerk to prison as well. This news did not disturb Avdeyev. He was convinced that he had been slandered, and that if he were to lodge a complaint to-day the examining magistrate would get into trouble for the search of the night before.

Between nine and ten o'clock he hurried to the town hall to see the secretary, who was the only educated man in the town council.

"Vladimir Stepanitch, what's this new fashion?" he said, bending down to the secretary's ear. "People have been stealing, but how do I come in? What

has it to do with me? My dear fellow," he whispered, "there has been a search at my house last night! Upon my word! Have they gone crazy? Why touch me?"

"Because one shouldn't be a sheep," the secretary answered calmly.

"Before you sign you ought to look."

"Look at what? But if I were to look at those accounts for a thousand years I could not make head or tail of them! It's all Greek to me! I am no book-keeper. They used to bring them to me and I signed them."

"Excuse me. Apart from that you and your committee are seriously compromised. You borrowed nineteen thousand from the bank, giving no security."

"Lord have mercy upon us!" cried Avdeyev in amazement. "I am not the only one in debt to the bank! The whole town owes it money. I pay the interest and I shall repay the debt. What next! And besides, to tell the honest truth, it wasn't I myself borrowed the money. Pyotr Semyonitch forced it upon me. 'Take it,' he said, 'take it. If you don't take it,' he said, 'it means that you don't trust us and fight shy of us. You take it,' he said, 'and build your father a mill.' So I took it."

"Well, you see, none but children or sheep can reason like that. In any case, *signor*, you need not be anxious. You can't escape trial, of course, but you are sure to be acquitted."

The secretary's indifference and calm tone restored Avdeyev's composure. Going back to his shop and finding friends there, he again began drinking, eating caviare, and airing his views. He almost forgot the police search, and he was only troubled by one circumstance which he could not help noticing: his left leg was strangely numb, and his stomach for some reason refused to do its work.

That evening destiny dealt another overwhelming blow at Avdeyev: at an extraordinary meeting of the town council all members who were on the staff of the bank, Avdeyev among them, were asked to resign, on the ground that they were charged with a criminal offence. In the morning he received a request to give up immediately his duties as churchwarden.

After that Avdeyev lost count of the blows dealt him by fate, and strange, unprecedented days flitted rapidly by, one after another, and every day brought some new, unexpected surprise. Among other things, the examining magistrate sent him a summons, and he returned home after the interview, insulted and red in the face.

"He gave me no peace, pestering me to tell him why I had signed. I signed, that's all about it. I didn't do it on purpose. They brought the papers to the shop and I signed them. I am no great hand at reading writing."

Young men with unconcerned faces arrived, sealed up the shop, and made an inventory of all the furniture of the house. Suspecting some intrigue behind this, and, as before, unconscious of any wrongdoing, Avdeyev in his mortification ran from one Government office to another lodging complaints. He spent hours together in waiting-rooms, composed long petitions, shed tears, swore. To his complaints the public prosecutor and the examining magistrate made the indifferent and rational reply: "Come to us when you are summoned: we have not time to attend to you now." While others answered: "It is not our business."

The secretary, an educated man, who, Avdeyev thought, might have helped him, merely shrugged his shoulders and said:

"It's your own fault. You shouldn't have been a sheep."

The old man exerted himself to the utmost, but his left leg was still numb, and his digestion was getting worse and worse. When he was weary of doing nothing and was getting poorer and poorer, he made up his mind to go to his father's mill, or to his brother, and begin dealing in corn. His family went to his father's and he was left alone. The days flitted by, one after another. Without a family, without a shop, and without money, the former churchwarden, an honoured and respected man, spent whole days going the round of his friends' shops, drinking, eating, and listening to advice. In the mornings and in the evenings, to while away the time, he went to church. Looking for hours together at the ikons, he did not pray, but pondered. His conscience was clear, and he ascribed his position to mistake and misunderstanding; to his mind, it was all due to the fact that the officials and the examining magistrates were young men and inexperienced. It seemed to him that if he were to talk it over in detail and open his heart to some elderly judge, everything would go right again. He did not understand his judges, and he fancied they did not understand him.

The days raced by, and at last, after protracted, harassing delays, the day of the trial came. Avdeyev borrowed fifty roubles, and providing himself with spirit to rub on his leg and a decoction of herbs for his digestion, set off for the town where the circuit court was being held.

The trial lasted for ten days. Throughout the trial Avdeyev sat among his companions in misfortune with the stolid composure and dignity befitting a

respectable and innocent man who is suffering for no fault of his own: he listened and did not understand a word. He was in an antagonistic mood. He was angry at being detained so long in the court, at being unable to get Lenten food anywhere, at his defending counsel's not understanding him, and, as he thought, saying the wrong thing. He thought that the judges did not understand their business. They took scarcely any notice of Avdeyev, they only addressed him once in three days, and the questions they put to him were of such a character that Avdeyev raised a laugh in the audience each time he answered them. When he tried to speak of the expenses he had incurred, of his losses, and of his meaning to claim his costs from the court, his counsel turned round and made an incomprehensible grimace, the public laughed, and the judge announced sternly that that had nothing to do with the case. The last words that he was allowed to say were not what his counsel had instructed him to say, but something quite different, which raised a laugh again.

During the terrible hour when the jury were consulting in their room he sat angrily in the refreshment bar, not thinking about the jury at all. He did not understand why they were so long deliberating when everything was so clear, and what they wanted of him.

Getting hungry, he asked the waiter to give him some cheap Lenten dish. For forty kopecks they gave him some cold fish and carrots. He ate it and felt at once as though the fish were heaving in a chilly lump in his stomach; it was followed by flatulence, heartburn, and pain.

Afterwards, as he listened to the foreman of the jury reading out the questions point by point, there was a regular revolution taking place in his inside, his whole body was bathed in a cold sweat, his left leg was numb; he did not follow, understood nothing, and suffered unbearably at not being able to sit or lie down while the foreman was reading. At last, when he and his companions were allowed to sit down, the public prosecutor got up and said something unintelligible, and all at once, as though they had sprung out of the earth, some police officers appeared on the scene with drawn swords and surrounded all the prisoners. Avdeyev was told to get up and go.

Now he understood that he was found guilty and in charge of the police, but he was not frightened nor amazed; such a turmoil was going on in his stomach that he could not think about his guards.

"So they won't let us go back to the hotel?" he asked one of his companions. "But I have three roubles and an untouched quarter of a pound

of tea in my room there."

He spent the night at the police station; all night he was aware of a loathing for fish, and was thinking about the three roubles and the quarter of a pound of tea. Early in the morning, when the sky was beginning to turn blue, he was told to dress and set off. Two soldiers with bayonets took him to prison. Never before had the streets of the town seemed to him so long and endless. He walked not on the pavement but in the middle of the road in the muddy, thawing snow. His inside was still at war with the fish, his left leg was numb; he had forgotten his goloshes either in the court or in the police station, and his feet felt frozen.

Five days later all the prisoners were brought before the court again to hear their sentence. Avdeyev learnt that he was sentenced to exile in the province of Tobolsk. And that did not frighten nor amaze him either. He fancied for some reason that the trial was not yet over, that there were more adjournments to come, and that the final decision had not been reached yet... He went on in the prison expecting this final decision every day.

Only six months later, when his wife and his son Vassily came to say good-bye to him, and when in the wasted, wretchedly dressed old woman he scarcely recognized his once fat and dignified Elizaveta Trofimovna, and when he saw his son wearing a short, shabby reefer-jacket and cotton trousers instead of the high-school uniform, he realized that his fate was decided, and that whatever new "decision" there might be, his past would never come back to him. And for the first time since the trial and his imprisonment the angry expression left his face, and he wept bitterly.

FROST

A "POPULAR" fête with a philanthropic object had been arranged on the Feast of Epiphany in the provincial town of N-. They had selected a broad part of the river between the market and the bishop's palace, fenced it round with a rope, with fir-trees and with flags, and provided everything necessary for skating, sledging, and tobogganing. The festivity was organized on the grandest scale possible. The notices that were distributed were of huge size and promised a number of delights: skating, a military band, a lottery with no blank tickets, an electric sun, and so on. But the whole scheme almost came to nothing owing to the hard frost. From the eve of Epiphany there were twenty-eight degrees of frost with a strong wind; it was proposed to put off the fête, and this was not done only because the public, which for a long while had been looking forward to the fête impatiently, would not consent to any postponement.

"Only think, what do you expect in winter but a frost!" said the ladies persuading the governor, who tried to insist that the fête should be postponed. "If anyone is cold he can go and warm himself."

The trees, the horses, the men's beards were white with frost; it even seemed that the air itself crackled, as though unable to endure the cold; but in spite of that the frozen public were skating. Immediately after the blessing of the waters and precisely at one o'clock the military band began playing.

Between three and four o'clock in the afternoon, when the festivity was at its height, the select society of the place gathered together to warm themselves in the governor's pavilion, which had been put up on the river-bank. The old governor and his wife, the bishop, the president of the local court, the head master of the high school, and many others, were there. The ladies were sitting in armchairs, while the men crowded round the wide glass door, looking at the skating.

"Holy Saints!" said the bishop in surprise; "what flourishes they execute with their legs! Upon my soul, many a singer couldn't do a twirl with his voice as those cut-throats do with their legs. Aie! he'll kill himself!"

"That's Smirnov... That's Gruzdev..." said the head master, mentioning the names of the schoolboys who flew by the pavilion.

"Bah! he's all alive-oh!" laughed the governor. "Look, gentlemen, our mayor is coming... He is coming this way... That's a nuisance, he will talk

our heads off now."

A little thin old man, wearing a big cap and a fur-lined coat hanging open, came from the opposite bank towards the pavilion, avoiding the skaters. This was the mayor of the town, a merchant, Eremeyev by name, a millionaire and an old inhabitant of N-. Flinging wide his arms and shrugging at the cold, he skipped along, knocking one golosh against the other, evidently in haste to get out of the wind. Half-way he suddenly bent down, stole up to some lady, and plucked at her sleeve from behind. When she looked round he skipped away, and probably delighted at having succeeded in frightening her, went off into a loud, aged laugh.

"Lively old fellow," said the governor. "It's a wonder he's not skating."

As he got near the pavilion the mayor fell into a little tripping trot, waved his hands, and, taking a run, slid along the ice in his huge golosh boots up to the very door.

"Yegor Ivanitch, you ought to get yourself some skates!" the governor greeted him.

"That's just what I am thinking," he answered in a squeaky, somewhat nasal tenor, taking off his cap. "I wish you good health, your Excellency! Your Holiness! Long life to all the other gentlemen and ladies! Here's a frost! Yes, it is a frost, bother it! It's deadly!"

Winking with his red, frozen eyes, Yegor Ivanitch stamped on the floor with his golosh boots and swung his arms together like a frozen cabman.

"Such a damnable frost, worse than any dog!" he went on talking, smiling all over his face. "It's a real affliction!"

"It's healthy," said the governor; "frost strengthens a man and makes him vigorous..."

"Though it may be healthy, it would be better without it at all," said the mayor, wiping his wedge-shaped beard with a red handkerchief. "It would be a good riddance! To my thinking, your Excellency, the Lord sends it us as a punishment-the frost, I mean. We sin in the summer and are punished in the winter... Yes!"

Yegor Ivanitch looked round him quickly and flung up his hands.

"Why, where's the needful... to warm us up?" he asked, looking in alarm first at the governor and then at the bishop. "Your Excellency! Your Holiness! I'll be bound, the ladies are frozen too! We must have something, this won't do!"

Everyone began gesticulating and declaring that they had not come to the

skating to warm themselves, but the mayor, heeding no one, opened the door and beckoned to someone with his crooked finger. A workman and a fireman ran up to him.

"Here, run off to Savatin," he muttered, "and tell him to make haste and send here... what do you call it?... What's it to be? Tell him to send a dozen glasses... a dozen glasses of mulled wine, the very hottest, or punch, perhaps..."

There was laughter in the pavilion.

"A nice thing to treat us to!"

"Never mind, we will drink it," muttered the mayor; "a dozen glasses, then... and some Benedictine, perhaps... and tell them to warm two bottles of red wine... Oh, and what for the ladies? Well, you tell them to bring cakes, nuts... sweets of some sort, perhaps... There, run along, look sharp!"

The mayor was silent for a minute and then began again abusing the frost, banging his arms across his chest and thumping with his golosh boots.

"No, Yegor Ivanitch," said the governor persuasively, "don't be unfair, the Russian frost has its charms. I was reading lately that many of the good qualities of the Russian people are due to the vast expanse of their land and to the climate, the cruel struggle for existence... that's perfectly true!"

"It may be true, your Excellency, but it would be better without it. The frost did drive out the French, of course, and one can freeze all sorts of dishes, and the children can go skating-that's all true! For the man who is well fed and well clothed the frost is only a pleasure, but for the working man, the beggar, the pilgrim, the crazy wanderer, it's the greatest evil and misfortune. It's misery, your Holiness! In a frost like this poverty is twice as hard, and the thief is more cunning and evildoers more violent. There's no gainsaying it! I am turned seventy, I've a fur coat now, and at home I have a stove and rums and punches of all sorts. The frost means nothing to me now; I take no notice of it, I don't care to know of it, but how it used to be in old days, Holy Mother! It's dreadful to recall it! My memory is failing me with years and I have forgotten everything; my enemies, and my sins and troubles of all sorts-I forget them all, but the frost-ough! How I remember it! When my mother died I was left a little devil-this high-a homeless orphan... no kith nor kin, wretched, ragged, little clothes, hungry, nowhere to sleep-in fact, 'we have here no abiding city, but seek the one to come.' In those days I used to lead an old blind woman about the town for five kopecks a day... the frosts were cruel, wicked. One would go out with the old woman and begin suffering

torments. My Creator! First of all you would be shivering as in a fever, shrugging and dancing about. Then your ears, your fingers, your feet, would begin aching. They would ache as though someone were squeezing them with pincers. But all that would have been nothing, a trivial matter, of no great consequence. The trouble was when your whole body was chilled. One would walk for three blessed hours in the frost, your Holiness, and lose all human semblance. Your legs are drawn up, there is a weight on your chest, your stomach is pinched; above all, there is a pain in your heart that is worse than anything. Your heart aches beyond all endurance, and there is a wretchedness all over your body as though you were leading Death by the hand instead of an old woman. You are numb all over, turned to stone like a statue; you go on and feel as though it were not you walking, but someone else moving your legs instead of you. When your soul is frozen you don't know what you are doing: you are ready to leave the old woman with no one to guide her, or to pull a hot roll from off a hawker's tray, or to fight with someone. And when you come to your night's lodging into the warmth after the frost, there is not much joy in that either! You lie awake till midnight, crying, and don't know yourself what you are crying for..."

"We must walk about the skating-ground before it gets dark," said the governor's wife, who was bored with listening. "Who's coming with me?"

The governor's wife went out and the whole company trooped out of the pavilion after her. Only the governor, the bishop, and the mayor remained.

"Queen of Heaven! and what I went through when I was a shopboy in a fish-shop!" Yegor Ivanitch went on, flinging up his arms so that his fox-lined coat fell open. "One would go out to the shop almost before it was light... by eight o'clock I was completely frozen, my face was blue, my fingers were stiff so that I could not fasten my buttons nor count the money. One would stand in the cold, turn numb, and think, 'Lord, I shall have to stand like this right on till evening!' By dinner-time my stomach was pinched and my heart was aching... Yes! And I was not much better afterwards when I had a shop of my own. The frost was intense and the shop was like a mouse-trap with draughts blowing in all directions; the coat I had on was, pardon me, mangy, as thin as paper, threadbare... One would be chilled through and through, half dazed, and turn as cruel as the frost oneself: I would pull one by the ear so that I nearly pulled the ear off; I would smack another on the back of the head; I'd glare at a customer like a ruffian, a wild beast, and be ready to fleece him; and when I got home in the evening and ought to have gone to

bed, I'd be ill-humoured and set upon my family, throwing it in their teeth that they were living upon me; I would make a row and carry on so that half a dozen policemen couldn't have managed me. The frost makes one spiteful and drives one to drink."

Yegor Ivanitch clasped his hands and went on:

"And when we were taking fish to Moscow in the winter, Holy Mother!" And spluttering as he talked, he began describing the horrors he endured with his shopmen when he was taking fish to Moscow...

"Yes," sighed the governor, "it is wonderful what a man can endure! You used to take wagon-loads of fish to Moscow, Yegor Ivanitch, while I in my time was at the war. I remember one extraordinary instance..."

And the governor described how, during the last Russo-Turkish War, one frosty night the division in which he was had stood in the snow without moving for thirteen hours in a piercing wind; from fear of being observed the division did not light a fire, nor make a sound or a movement; they were forbidden to smoke...

Reminiscences followed. The governor and the mayor grew lively and good-humoured, and, interrupting each other, began recalling their experiences. And the bishop told them how, when he was serving in Siberia, he had travelled in a sledge drawn by dogs; how one day, being drowsy, in a time of sharp frost he had fallen out of the sledge and been nearly frozen; when the Tunguses turned back and found him he was barely alive. Then, as by common agreement, the old men suddenly sank into silence, sat side by side, and mused.

"Ech!" whispered the mayor; "you'd think it would be time to forget, but when you look at the water-carriers, at the schoolboys, at the convicts in their wretched gowns, it brings it all back! Why, only take those musicians who are playing now. I'll be bound, there is a pain in their hearts; a pinch at their stomachs, and their trumpets are freezing to their lips... They play and think: 'Holy Mother! we have another three hours to sit here in the cold.'"

The old men sank into thought. They thought of that in man which is higher than good birth, higher than rank and wealth and learning, of that which brings the lowest beggar near to God: of the helplessness of man, of his sufferings and his patience...

Meanwhile the air was turning blue... the door opened and two waiters from Savatin's walked in, carrying trays and a big muffled teapot. When the glasses had been filled and there was a strong smell of cinnamon and clove in

the air, the door opened again, and there came into the pavilion a beardless young policeman whose nose was crimson, and who was covered all over with frost; he went up to the governor, and, saluting, said: "Her Excellency told me to inform you that she has gone home."

Looking at the way the policeman put his stiff, frozen fingers to his cap, looking at his nose, his lustreless eyes, and his hood covered with white frost near the mouth, they all for some reason felt that this policeman's heart must be aching, that his stomach must feel pinched, and his soul numb...

"I say," said the governor hesitatingly, "have a drink of mulled wine!"

"It's all right... it's all right! Drink it up!" the mayor urged him, gesticulating; "don't be shy!"

The policeman took the glass in both hands, moved aside, and, trying to drink without making any sound, began discreetly sipping from the glass. He drank and was overwhelmed with embarrassment while the old men looked at him in silence, and they all fancied that the pain was leaving the young policeman's heart, and that his soul was thawing. The governor heaved a sigh.

"It's time we were at home," he said, getting up. "Good-bye! I say," he added, addressing the policeman, "tell the musicians there to... leave off playing, and ask Pavel Semyonovitch from me to see they are given... beer or vodka."

The governor and the bishop said good-bye to the mayor and went out of the pavilion.

Yegor Ivanitch attacked the mulled wine, and before the policeman had finished his glass succeeded in telling him a great many interesting things. He could not be silent.

MINDS IN FERMENT

(FROM THE ANNALS OF A TOWN)

THE earth was like an oven. The afternoon sun blazed with such energy that even the thermometer hanging in the excise officer's room lost its head: it ran up to 112.5 and stopped there, irresolute. The inhabitants streamed with perspiration like overdriven horses, and were too lazy to mop their faces.

Two of the inhabitants were walking along the market-place in front of the closely shuttered houses. One was Potcheshihin, the local treasury clerk, and the other was Optimov, the agent, for many years a correspondent of the *Son of the Fatherland* newspaper. They walked in silence, speechless from the heat. Optimov felt tempted to find fault with the local authorities for the dust and disorder of the market-place, but, aware of the peace-loving disposition and moderate views of his companion, he said nothing.

In the middle of the market-place Potcheshihin suddenly halted and began gazing into the sky.

"What are you looking at?"

"Those starlings that flew up. I wonder where they have settled. Clouds and clouds of them... If one were to go and take a shot at them, and if one were to pick them up... and if... They have settled in the Father Prebendary's garden!"

"Oh no! They are not in the Father Prebendary's, they are in the Father Deacon's. If you did have a shot at them from here you wouldn't kill anything. Fine shot won't carry so far; it loses its force. And why should you kill them, anyway? They're birds destructive of the fruit, that's true; still, they're fowls of the air, works of the Lord. The starling sings, you know... And what does it sing, pray? A song of praise... 'All ye fowls of the air, praise ye the Lord.' No. I do believe they have settled in the Father Prebendary's garden."

Three old pilgrim women, wearing bark shoes and carrying wallets, passed noiselessly by the speakers. Looking enquiringly at the gentlemen who were for some unknown reason staring at the Father Prebendary's house, they slackened their pace, and when they were a few yards off stopped, glanced at the friends once more, and then fell to gazing at the house themselves.

"Yes, you were right; they have settled in the Father Prebendary's," said

Optimov. "His cherries are ripe now, so they have gone there to peck them."

From the garden gate emerged the Father Prebendary himself, accompanied by the sexton. Seeing the attention directed upon his abode and wondering what people were staring at, he stopped, and he, too, as well as the sexton, began looking upwards to find out.

"The father is going to a service somewhere, I suppose," said Potcheshihin. "The Lord be his succour!"

Some workmen from Purov's factory, who had been bathing in the river, passed between the friends and the priest. Seeing the latter absorbed in contemplation of the heavens and the pilgrim women, too, standing motionless with their eyes turned upwards, they stood still and stared in the same direction.

A small boy leading a blind beggar and a peasant, carrying a tub of stinking fish to throw into the market-place, did the same.

"There must be something the matter, I should think," said Potcheshihin, "a fire or something. But there's no sign of smoke anywhere. Hey! Kuzma!" he shouted to the peasant, "what's the matter?"

The peasant made some reply, but Potcheshihin and Optimov did not catch it. Sleepy-looking shopmen made their appearance at the doors of all the shops. Some plasterers at work on a warehouse near left their ladders and joined the workmen.

The fireman, who was describing circles with his bare feet, on the watch-tower, halted, and, after looking steadily at them for a few minutes, came down. The watch-tower was left deserted. This seemed suspicious.

"There must be a fire somewhere. Don't shove me! You damned swine!"

"Where do you see the fire? What fire? Pass on, gentlemen! I ask you civilly!"

"It must be a fire indoors!"

"Asks us civilly and keeps poking with his elbows. Keep your hands to yourself! Though you are a head constable, you have no sort of right to make free with your fists!"

"He's trodden on my corn! Ah! I'll crush you!"

"Crushed? Who's crushed? Lads! a man's been crushed!"

"What's the meaning of this crowd? What do you want?"

"A man's been crushed, please your honour!"

"Where? Pass on! I ask you civilly! I ask you civilly, you blockheads!"

"You may shove a peasant, but you daren't touch a gentleman! Hands

off!"

"Did you ever know such people? There's no doing anything with them by fair words, the devils! Sidorov, run for Akim Danilitch! Look sharp! It'll be the worse for you, gentlemen! Akim Danilitch is coming, and he'll give it to you! You here, Parfen? A blind man, and at his age too! Can't see, but he must be like other people and won't do what he's told. Smirnov, put his name down!"

"Yes, sir! And shall I write down the men from Purov's? That man there with the swollen cheek, he's from Purov's works."

"Don't put down the men from Purov's. It's Purov's birthday to-morrow."

The starlings rose in a black cloud from the Father Prebendary's garden, but Potcheshihin and Optimov did not notice them. They stood staring into the air, wondering what could have attracted such a crowd, and what it was looking at.

Akim Danilitch appeared. Still munching and wiping his lips, he cut his way into the crowd, bellowing:

"Firemen, be ready! Disperse! Mr. Optimov, disperse, or it'll be the worse for you! Instead of writing all kinds of things about decent people in the papers, you had better try to behave yourself more conformably! No good ever comes of reading the papers!"

"Kindly refrain from reflections upon literature!" cried Optimov hotly. "I am a literary man, and I will allow no one to make reflections upon literature! though, as is the duty of a citizen, I respect you as a father and benefactor!"

"Firemen, turn the hose on them!"

"There's no water, please your honour!"

"Don't answer me! Go and get some! Look sharp!"

"We've nothing to get it in, your honour. The major has taken the fire-brigade horses to drive his aunt to the station."

"Disperse! Stand back, damnation take you! Is that to your taste?"

Put him down, the devil!"

"I've lost my pencil, please your honour!"

The crowd grew larger and larger. There is no telling what proportions it might have reached if the new organ just arrived from Moscow had not fortunately begun playing in the tavern close by. Hearing their favourite tune, the crowd gasped and rushed off to the tavern. So nobody ever knew why the crowd had assembled, and Potcheshihin and Optimov had by now forgotten the existence of the starlings who were innocently responsible for the

proceedings.

An hour later the town was still and silent again, and only a solitary figure was to be seen-the fireman pacing round and round on the watch-tower.

The same evening Akim Danilitch sat in the grocer's shop drinking *limonade gaseuse* and brandy, and writing:

"In addition to the official report, I venture, your Excellency, to append a few supplementary observations of my own. Father and benefactor! In very truth, but for the prayers of your virtuous spouse in her salubrious villa near our town, there's no knowing what might not have come to pass. What I have been through to-day I can find no words to express. The efficiency of Krushensky and of the major of the fire brigade are beyond all praise! I am proud of such devoted servants of our country! As for me, I did all that a weak man could do, whose only desire is the welfare of his neighbour; and sitting now in the bosom of my family, with tears in my eyes I thank Him Who spared us bloodshed! In absence of evidence, the guilty parties remain in custody, but I propose to release them in a week or so. It was their ignorance that led them astray!"

GONE ASTRAY

A COUNTRY village wrapped in the darkness of night. One o'clock strikes from the belfry. Two lawyers, called Kozyavkin and Laev, both in the best of spirits and a little unsteady on their legs, come out of the wood and turn towards the cottages.

"Well, thank God, we've arrived," says Kozyavkin, drawing a deep breath. "Tramping four miles from the station in our condition is a feat. I am fearfully done up! And, as ill-luck would have it, not a fly to be seen."

"Petya, my dear fellow... I can't... I feel like dying if I'm not in bed in five minutes."

"In bed! Don't you think it, my boy! First we'll have supper and a glass of red wine, and then you can go to bed. Verotchka and I will wake you up... Ah, my dear fellow, it's a fine thing to be married! You don't understand it, you cold-hearted wretch! I shall be home in a minute, worn out and exhausted... A loving wife will welcome me, give me some tea and something to eat, and repay me for my hard work and my love with such a fond and loving look out of her darling black eyes that I shall forget how tired I am, and forget the burglary and the law courts and the appeal division... It's glorious!"

"Yes-I say, I feel as though my legs were dropping off, I can scarcely get along... I am frightfully thirsty..."

"Well, here we are at home."

The friends go up to one of the cottages, and stand still under the nearest window.

"It's a jolly cottage," said Kozyavkin. "You will see to-morrow what views we have! There's no light in the windows. Verotchka must have gone to bed, then; she must have got tired of sitting up. She's in bed, and must be worrying at my not having turned up." (He pushes the window with his stick, and it opens.) "Plucky girl! She goes to bed without bolting the window." (He takes off his cape and flings it with his portfolio in at the window.) "I am hot! Let us strike up a serenade and make her laugh!" (He sings.) "The moon floats in the midnight sky... Faintly stir the tender breezes... Faintly rustle in the treetops... Sing, sing, Alyosha! Verotchka, shall we sing you Schubert's Serenade?" (He sings.)

His performance is cut short by a sudden fit of coughing. "Tphoo!

Verotchka, tell Aksinya to unlock the gate for us!" (A pause.) "Verotchka! don't be lazy, get up, darling!" (He stands on a stone and looks in at the window.) "Verotchka, my dumpling; Verotchka, my poppet... my little angel, my wife beyond compare, get up and tell Aksinya to unlock the gate for us! You are not asleep, you know. Little wife, we are really so done up and exhausted that we're not in the mood for jokes. We've trudged all the way from the station! Don't you hear? Ah, hang it all!" (He makes an effort to climb up to the window and falls down.) "You know this isn't a nice trick to play on a visitor! I see you are just as great a schoolgirl as ever, Vera, you are always up to mischief!"

"Perhaps Vera Stepanovna is asleep," says Laev.

"She isn't asleep! I bet she wants me to make an outcry and wake up the whole neighbourhood. I'm beginning to get cross, Vera! Ach, damn it all! Give me a leg up, Alyosha; I'll get in. You are a naughty girl, nothing but a regular schoolgirl... Give me a hoist."

Puffing and panting, Laev gives him a leg up, and Kozyavkin climbs in at the window and vanishes into the darkness within.

"Vera!" Laev hears a minute later, "where are you?... D-damnation!

Tphoo! I've put my hand into something! Tphoo!"

There is a rustling sound, a flapping of wings, and the desperate cackling of a fowl.

"A nice state of things," Laev hears. "Vera, where on earth did these chickens come from? Why, the devil, there's no end of them! There's a basket with a turkey in it... It pecks, the nasty creature."

Two hens fly out of the window, and cackling at the top of their voices, flutter down the village street.

"Alyosha, we've made a mistake!" says Kozyavkin in a lachrymose voice. "There are a lot of hens here... I must have mistaken the house. Confound you, you are all over the place, you cursed brutes!"

"Well, then, make haste and come down. Do you hear? I am dying of thirst!"

"In a minute... I am looking for my cape and portfolio."

"Light a match."

"The matches are in the cape... I was a crazy idiot to get into this place. The cottages are exactly alike; the devil himself couldn't tell them apart in the dark. Aie, the turkey's pecked my cheek, nasty creature!"

"Make haste and get out or they'll think we are stealing the chickens."

"In a minute... I can't find my cape anywhere... There are lots of old rags here, and I can't tell where the cape is. Throw me a match."

"I haven't any."

"We are in a hole, I must say! What am I to do? I can't go without my cape and my portfolio. I must find them."

"I can't understand a man's not knowing his own cottage," says Laev indignantly. "Drunken beast... If I'd known I was in for this sort of thing I would never have come with you. I should have been at home and fast asleep by now, and a nice fix I'm in here... I'm fearfully done up and thirsty, and my head is going round."

"In a minute, in a minute... You won't expire."

A big cock flies crowing over Laev's head. Laev heaves a deep sigh, and with a hopeless gesture sits down on a stone. He is beset with a burning thirst, his eyes are closing, his head drops forward... Five minutes pass, ten, twenty, and Kozyavkin is still busy among the hens.

"Petya, will you be long?"

"A minute. I found the portfolio, but I have lost it again."

Laev lays his head on his fists, and closes his eyes. The cackling of the fowls grows louder and louder. The inhabitants of the empty cottage fly out of the window and flutter round in circles, he fancies, like owls over his head. His ears ring with their cackle, he is overwhelmed with terror.

"The beast!" he thinks. "He invited me to stay, promising me wine and junket, and then he makes me walk from the station and listen to these hens..."

In the midst of his indignation his chin sinks into his collar, he lays his head on his portfolio, and gradually subsides. Weariness gets the upper hand and he begins to doze.

"I've found the portfolio!" he hears Kozyavkin cry triumphantly.

"I shall find the cape in a minute and then off we go!"

Then through his sleep he hears the barking of dogs. First one dog barks, then a second, and a third... And the barking of the dogs blends with the cackling of the fowls into a sort of savage music. Someone comes up to Laev and asks him something. Then he hears someone climb over his head into the window, then a knocking and a shouting... A woman in a red apron stands beside him with a lantern in her hand and asks him something.

"You've no right to say so," he hears Kozyavkin's voice. "I am a lawyer, a bachelor of laws-Kozyavkin-here's my visiting card."

"What do I want with your card?" says someone in a husky bass. "You've disturbed all my fowls, you've smashed the eggs! Look what you've done. The turkey poults were to have come out to-day or to-morrow, and you've smashed them. What's the use of your giving me your card, sir?"

"How dare you interfere with me! No! I won't have it!"

"I am thirsty," thinks Laev, trying to open his eyes, and he feels somebody climb down from the window over his head.

"My name is Kozyavkin! I have a cottage here. Everyone knows me."

"We don't know anyone called Kozyavkin."

"What are you saying? Call the elder. He knows me."

"Don't get excited, the constable will be here directly... We know all the summer visitors here, but I've never seen you in my life."

"I've had a cottage in Rottendale for five years."

"Whew! Do you take this for the Dale? This is Sicklystead, but Rottendale is farther to the right, beyond the match factory. It's three miles from here."

"Bless my soul! Then I've taken the wrong turning!"

The cries of men and fowls mingle with the barking of dogs, and the voice of Kozyavkin rises above the chaos of confused sounds:

"You shut up! I'll pay. I'll show you whom you have to deal with!"

Little by little the voices die down. Laev feels himself being shaken by the shoulder...

AN AVENGER

SHORTLY after finding his wife *in flagrante delicto* Fyodor Fyodorovitch Sigaev was standing in Schmuck and Co.'s, the gunsmiths, selecting a suitable revolver. His countenance expressed wrath, grief, and unalterable determination.

"I know what I must do," he was thinking. "The sanctities of the home are outraged, honour is trampled in the mud, vice is triumphant, and therefore as a citizen and a man of honour I must be their avenger. First, I will kill her and her lover and then myself."

He had not yet chosen a revolver or killed anyone, but already in imagination he saw three bloodstained corpses, broken skulls, brains oozing from them, the commotion, the crowd of gaping spectators, the post-mortem... With the malignant joy of an insulted man he pictured the horror of the relations and the public, the agony of the traitress, and was mentally reading leading articles on the destruction of the traditions of the home.

The shopman, a sprightly little Frenchified figure with rounded belly and white waistcoat, displayed the revolvers, and smiling respectfully and scraping with his little feet observed:

"... I would advise you, M'sieur, to take this superb revolver, the Smith and Wesson pattern, the last word in the science of firearms: triple-action, with ejector, kills at six hundred paces, central sight. Let me draw your attention, M'sieu, to the beauty of the finish. The most fashionable system, M'sieu. We sell a dozen every day for burglars, wolves, and lovers. Very correct and powerful action, hits at a great distance, and kills wife and lover with one bullet. As for suicide, M'sieu, I don't know a better pattern."

The shopman pulled and cocked the trigger, breathed on the barrel, took aim, and affected to be breathless with delight. Looking at his ecstatic countenance, one might have supposed that he would readily have put a bullet through his brains if he had only possessed a revolver of such a superb pattern as a Smith-Wesson.

"And what price?" asked Sigaev.

"Forty-five roubles, M'sieu."

"Mm!... that's too dear for me."

"In that case, M'sieu, let me offer you another make, somewhat cheaper. Here, if you'll kindly look, we have an immense choice, at all prices... Here,

for instance, this revolver of the Lefaucher pattern costs only eighteen roubles, but..." (the shopman pursed up his face contemptuously) "... but, M'sieu, it's an old-fashioned make. They are only bought by hysterical ladies or the mentally deficient. To commit suicide or shoot one's wife with a Lefaucher revolver is considered bad form nowadays. Smith-Wesson is the only pattern that's correct style."

"I don't want to shoot myself or to kill anyone," said Sigaev, lying sullenly. "I am buying it simply for a country cottage... to frighten away burglars..."

"That's not our business, what object you have in buying it." The shopman smiled, dropping his eyes discreetly. "If we were to investigate the object in each case, M'sieu, we should have to close our shop. To frighten burglars Lefaucher is not a suitable pattern, M'sieu, for it goes off with a faint, muffled sound. I would suggest Mortimer's, the so-called duelling pistol..."

"Shouldn't I challenge him to a duel?" flashed through Sigaev's mind. "It's doing him too much honour, though... Beasts like that are killed like dogs..."

The shopman, swaying gracefully and tripping to and fro on his little feet, still smiling and chattering, displayed before him a heap of revolvers. The most inviting and impressive of all was the Smith and Wesson's. Sigaev picked up a pistol of that pattern, gazed blankly at it, and sank into brooding. His imagination pictured how he would blow out their brains, how blood would flow in streams over the rug and the parquet, how the traitress's legs would twitch in her last agony... But that was not enough for his indignant soul. The picture of blood, wailing, and horror did not satisfy him. He must think of something more terrible.

"I know! I'll kill myself and him," he thought, "but I'll leave her alive. Let her pine away from the stings of conscience and the contempt of all surrounding her. For a sensitive nature like hers that will be far more agonizing than death."

And he imagined his own funeral: he, the injured husband, lies in his coffin with a gentle smile on his lips, and she, pale, tortured by remorse, follows the coffin like a Niobe, not knowing where to hide herself to escape from the withering, contemptuous looks cast upon her by the indignant crowd.

"I see, M'sieu, that you like the Smith and Wesson make," the shopman broke in upon his broodings. "If you think it too dear, very well, I'll knock off

five roubles... But we have other makes, cheaper."

The little Frenchified figure turned gracefully and took down another dozen cases of revolvers from the shelf.

"Here, M'sieu, price thirty roubles. That's not expensive, especially as the rate of exchange has dropped terribly and the Customs duties are rising every hour. M'sieu, I vow I am a Conservative, but even I am beginning to murmur. Why, with the rate of exchange and the Customs tariff, only the rich can purchase firearms. There's nothing left for the poor but Tula weapons and phosphorus matches, and Tula weapons are a misery! You may aim at your wife with a Tula revolver and shoot yourself through the shoulder-blade."

Sigaev suddenly felt mortified and sorry that he would be dead, and would miss seeing the agonies of the traitress. Revenge is only sweet when one can see and taste its fruits, and what sense would there be in it if he were lying in his coffin, knowing nothing about it?

"Hadn't I better do this?" he pondered. "I'll kill him, then I'll go to his funeral and look on, and after the funeral I'll kill myself. They'd arrest me, though, before the funeral, and take away my pistol... And so I'll kill him, she shall remain alive, and I... for the time, I'll not kill myself, but go and be arrested. I shall always have time to kill myself. There will be this advantage about being arrested, that at the preliminary investigation I shall have an opportunity of exposing to the authorities and to the public all the infamy of her conduct. If I kill myself she may, with her characteristic duplicity and impudence, throw all the blame on me, and society will justify her behaviour and will very likely laugh at me... If I remain alive, then..."

A minute later he was thinking:

"Yes, if I kill myself I may be blamed and suspected of petty feeling... Besides, why should I kill myself? That's one thing. And for another, to shoot oneself is cowardly. And so I'll kill him and let her live, and I'll face my trial. I shall be tried, and she will be brought into court as a witness... I can imagine her confusion, her disgrace when she is examined by my counsel! The sympathies of the court, of the Press, and of the public will certainly be with me."

While he deliberated the shopman displayed his wares, and felt it incumbent upon him to entertain his customer.

"Here are English ones, a new pattern, only just received," he prattled on. "But I warn you, M'sieu, all these systems pale beside the Smith and Wesson. The other day-as I dare say you have read-an officer bought from us a Smith

and Wesson. He shot his wife's lover, and-would you believe it? – the bullet passed through him, pierced the bronze lamp, then the piano, and ricocheted back from the piano, killing the lap-dog and bruising the wife. A magnificent record redounding to the honour of our firm! The officer is now under arrest. He will no doubt be convicted and sent to penal servitude. In the first place, our penal code is quite out of date; and, secondly, M'sieu, the sympathies of the court are always with the lover. Why is it? Very simple, M'sieu. The judges and the jury and the prosecutor and the counsel for the defence are all living with other men's wives, and it'll add to their comfort that there will be one husband the less in Russia. Society would be pleased if the Government were to send all the husbands to Sahalin. Oh, M'sieu, you don't know how it excites my indignation to see the corruption of morals nowadays. To love other men's wives is as much the regular thing to-day as to smoke other men's cigarettes and to read other men's books. Every year our trade gets worse and worse-it doesn't mean that wives are more faithful, but that husbands resign themselves to their position and are afraid of the law and penal servitude."

The shopman looked round and whispered: "And whose fault is it, M'sieu? The Government's."

"To go to Sahalin for the sake of a pig like that-there's no sense in that either," Sigaev pondered. "If I go to penal servitude it will only give my wife an opportunity of marrying again and deceiving a second husband. She would triumph... And so I will leave *her* alive, I won't kill myself, *him*... I won't kill either. I must think of something more sensible and more effective. I will punish them with my contempt, and will take divorce proceedings that will make a scandal."

"Here, M'sieu, is another make," said the shopman, taking down another dozen from the shelf. "Let me call your attention to the original mechanism of the lock."

In view of his determination a revolver was now of no use to Sigaev, but the shopman, meanwhile, getting more and more enthusiastic, persisted in displaying his wares before him. The outraged husband began to feel ashamed that the shopman should be taking so much trouble on his account for nothing, that he should be smiling, wasting time, displaying enthusiasm for nothing.

"Very well, in that case," he muttered, "I'll look in again later on... or I'll send someone."

He didn't see the expression of the shopman's face, but to smooth over the

awkwardness of the position a little he felt called upon to make some purchase. But what should he buy? He looked round the walls of the shop to pick out something inexpensive, and his eyes rested on a green net hanging near the door.

"That's... what's that?" he asked.

"That's a net for catching quails."

"And what price is it?"

"Eight roubles, M'sieu."

"Wrap it up for me..."

The outraged husband paid his eight roubles, took the net, and, feeling even more outraged, walked out of the shop.

THE JEUNE PREMIER

YEVGENY ALEXEYITCH PODZHAROV, the *jeune premier*, a graceful, elegant young man with an oval face and little bags under his eyes, had come for the season to one of the southern towns of Russia, and tried at once to make the acquaintance of a few of the leading families of the place. "Yes, signor," he would often say, gracefully swinging his foot and displaying his red socks, "an artist ought to act upon the masses, both directly and indirectly; the first aim is attained by his work on the stage, the second by an acquaintance with the local inhabitants. On my honour, *parole d'honneur*, I don't understand why it is we actors avoid making acquaintance with local families. Why is it? To say nothing of dinners, name-day parties, feasts, *soirées fixes*, to say nothing of these entertainments, think of the moral influence we may have on society! Is it not agreeable to feel one has dropped a spark in some thick skull? The types one meets! The women! *Mon Dieu*, what women! they turn one's head! One penetrates into some huge merchant's house, into the sacred retreats, and picks out some fresh and rosy little peach-it's heaven, *parole d'honneur*! "

In the southern town, among other estimable families he made the acquaintance of that of a manufacturer called Zybaev. Whenever he remembers that acquaintance now he frowns contemptuously, screws up his eyes, and nervously plays with his watch-chain.

One day-it was at a name-day party at Zybaev's-the actor was sitting in his new friends' drawing-room and holding forth as usual. Around him "types" were sitting in armchairs and on the sofa, listening affably; from the next room came feminine laughter and the sounds of evening tea... Crossing his legs, after each phrase sipping tea with rum in it, and trying to assume an expression of careless boredom, he talked of his stage triumphs.

"I am a provincial actor principally," he said, smiling condescendingly, "but I have played in Petersburg and Moscow too... By the way, I will describe an incident which illustrates pretty well the state of mind of to-day. At my benefit in Moscow the young people brought me such a mass of laurel wreaths that I swear by all I hold sacred I did not know where to put them! *Parole d'honneur*! Later on, at a moment when funds were short, I took the laurel wreaths to the shop, and... guess what they weighed. Eighty pounds altogether. Ha, ha! you can't think how useful the money was. Artists, indeed,

are often hard up. To-day I have hundreds, thousands, tomorrow nothing... To-day I haven't a crust of bread, to-morrow I have oysters and anchovies, hang it all!"

The local inhabitants sipped their glasses decorously and listened. The well-pleased host, not knowing how to make enough of his cultured and interesting visitor, presented to him a distant relative who had just arrived, one Pavel Ignatyevitch Klimov, a bulky gentleman about forty, wearing a long frock-coat and very full trousers.

"You ought to know each other," said Zybaev as he presented Klimov; "he loves theatres, and at one time used to act himself. He has an estate in the Tula province."

Podzharov and Klimov got into conversation. It appeared, to the great satisfaction of both, that the Tula landowner lived in the very town in which the *jeune premier* had acted for two seasons in succession. Enquiries followed about the town, about common acquaintances, and about the theatre...

"Do you know, I like that town awfully," said the *jeune premier*, displaying his red socks. "What streets, what a charming park, and what society! Delightful society!"

"Yes, delightful society," the landowner assented.

"A commercial town, but extremely cultured... For instance, er-er-er... the head master of the high school, the public prosecutor... the officers... The police captain, too, was not bad, a man, as the French say, *enchanté*, and the women, Allah, what women!"

"Yes, the women... certainly..."

"Perhaps I am partial; the fact is that in your town, I don't know why, I was devilishly lucky with the fair sex! I could write a dozen novels. To take this episode, for instance... I was staying in Yegoryevsky Street, in the very house where the Treasury is..."

"The red house without stucco?"

"Yes, yes... without stucco... Close by, as I remember now, lived a local beauty, Varenka..."

"Not Varvara Nikolayevna?" asked Klimov, and he beamed with satisfaction. "She really is a beauty... the most beautiful girl in the town."

"The most beautiful girl in the town! A classic profile, great black eyes... and hair to her waist! She saw me in 'Hamlet,' she wrote me a letter *à la* Pushkin's 'Tatyana.'... I answered, as you may guess..."

Podzharov looked round, and having satisfied himself that there were no ladies in the room, rolled his eyes, smiled mournfully, and heaved a sigh.

"I came home one evening after a performance," he whispered, "and there she was, sitting on my sofa. There followed tears, protestations of love, kisses... Oh, that was a marvellous, that was a divine night! Our romance lasted two months, but that night was never repeated. It was a night, parole d'honneur!"

"Excuse me, what's that?" muttered Klimov, turning crimson and gazing open-eyed at the actor. "I know Varvara Nikolayevna well: she's my niece."

Podzharov was embarrassed, and he, too, opened his eyes wide.

"How's this?" Klimov went on, throwing up his hands. "I know the girl, and... and... I am surprised..."

"I am very sorry this has come up," muttered the actor, getting up and rubbing something out of his left eye with his little finger. "Though, of course... of course, you as her uncle..."

The other guests, who had hitherto been listening to the actor with pleasure and rewarding him with smiles, were embarrassed and dropped their eyes.

"Please, do be so good... take your words back..." said Klimov in extreme embarrassment. "I beg you to do so!"

"If... er-er-er... it offends you, certainly," answered the actor, with an undefined movement of his hand.

"And confess you have told a falsehood."

"I, no... er-er-er... It was not a lie, but I greatly regret having spoken too freely... And, in fact... I don't understand your tone!"

Klimov walked up and down the room in silence, as though in uncertainty and hesitation. His fleshy face grew more and more crimson, and the veins in his neck swelled up. After walking up and down for about two minutes he went up to the actor and said in a tearful voice:

"No, do be so good as to confess that you told a lie about Varenka!

Have the goodness to do so!"

"It's queer," said the actor, with a strained smile, shrugging his shoulders and swinging his leg. "This is positively insulting!"

"So you will not confess it?"

"I do-on't understand!"

"You will not? In that case, excuse me... I shall have to resort to unpleasant measures. Either, sir, I shall insult you at once on the spot, or... if

you are an honourable man, you will kindly accept my challenge to a duel... We will fight!"

"Certainly!" rapped out the jeune premier, with a contemptuous gesture. "Certainly."

Extremely perturbed, the guests and the host, not knowing what to do, drew Klimov aside and began begging him not to get up a scandal. Astonished feminine countenances appeared in the doorway... The jeune premier turned round, said a few words, and with an air of being unable to remain in a house where he was insulted, took his cap and made off without saying good-bye.

On his way home the jeune premier smiled contemptuously and shrugged his shoulders, but when he reached his hotel room and stretched himself on his sofa he felt exceedingly uneasy.

"The devil take him!" he thought. "A duel does not matter, he won't kill me, but the trouble is the other fellows will hear of it, and they know perfectly well it was a yarn. It's abominable! I shall be disgraced all over Russia..."

Podzharov thought a little, smoked, and to calm himself went out into the street.

"I ought to talk to this bully, ram into his stupid noddle that he is a blockhead and a fool, and that I am not in the least afraid of him..."

The jeune premier stopped before Zybaev's house and looked at the windows. Lights were still burning behind the muslin curtains and figures were moving about.

"I'll wait for him!" the actor decided.

It was dark and cold. A hateful autumn rain was drizzling as though through a sieve. Podzharov leaned his elbow on a lamp-post and abandoned himself to a feeling of uneasiness.

He was wet through and exhausted.

At two o'clock in the night the guests began coming out of Zybaev's house. The landowner from Tula was the last to make his appearance. He heaved a sigh that could be heard by the whole street and scraped the pavement with his heavy overboots.

"Excuse me!" said the jeune premier, overtaking him. "One minute."

Klimov stopped. The actor gave a smile, hesitated, and began, stammering: "I... I confess... I told a lie."

"No, sir, you will please confess that publicly," said Klimov, and he

turned crimson again. "I can't leave it like that..."

"But you see I am apologizing! I beg you... don't you understand? I beg you because you will admit a duel will make talk, and I am in a position... My fellow-actors... goodness knows what they may think..."

The jeune premier tried to appear unconcerned, to smile, to stand erect, but his body would not obey him, his voice trembled, his eyes blinked guiltily, and his head drooped. For a good while he went on muttering something. Klimov listened to him, thought a little, and heaved a sigh.

"Well, so be it," he said. "May God forgive you. Only don't lie in future, young man. Nothing degrades a man like lying... yes, indeed! You are a young man, you have had a good education..."

The landowner from Tula, in a benignant, fatherly way, gave him a lecture, while the jeune premier listened and smiled meekly... When it was over he smirked, bowed, and with a guilty step and a crestfallen air set off for his hotel.

As he went to bed half an hour later he felt that he was out of danger and was already in excellent spirits. Serene and satisfied that the misunderstanding had ended so satisfactorily, he wrapped himself in the bedclothes, soon fell asleep, and slept soundly till ten o'clock next morning.

A DEFENCELESS CREATURE

IN spite of a violent attack of gout in the night and the nervous exhaustion left by it, Kistunov went in the morning to his office and began punctually seeing the clients of the bank and persons who had come with petitions. He looked languid and exhausted, and spoke in a faint voice hardly above a whisper, as though he were dying.

"What can I do for you?" he asked a lady in an antediluvian mantle, whose back view was extremely suggestive of a huge dung-beetle.

"You see, your Excellency," the petitioner in question began, speaking rapidly, "my husband Shtchukin, a collegiate assessor, was ill for five months, and while he, if you will excuse my saying so, was laid up at home, he was for no sort of reason dismissed, your Excellency; and when I went for his salary they deducted, if you please, your Excellency, twenty-four roubles thirty-six kopecks from his salary. 'What for?' I asked. 'He borrowed from the club fund,' they told me, 'and the other clerks had stood security for him.' How was that? How could he have borrowed it without my consent? It's impossible, your Excellency. What's the reason of it? I am a poor woman, I earn my bread by taking in lodgers. I am a weak, defenceless woman... I have to put up with ill-usage from everyone and never hear a kind word..."

The petitioner was blinking, and dived into her mantle for her handkerchief. Kistunov took her petition from her and began reading it.

"Excuse me, what's this?" he asked, shrugging his shoulders. "I can make nothing of it. Evidently you have come to the wrong place, madam. Your petition has nothing to do with us at all. You will have to apply to the department in which your husband was employed."

"Why, my dear sir, I have been to five places already, and they would not even take the petition anywhere," said Madame Shtchukin. "I'd quite lost my head, but, thank goodness-God bless him for it-my son-in-law, Boris Matveyitch, advised me to come to you. 'You go to Mr. Kistunov, mamma: he is an influential man, he can do anything for you...' Help me, your Excellency!"

"We can do nothing for you, Madame Shtchukin. You must understand: your husband served in the Army Medical Department, and our establishment is a purely private commercial undertaking, a bank. Surely you must understand that!"

Kistunov shrugged his shoulders again and turned to a gentleman in a military uniform, with a swollen face.

"Your Excellency," piped Madame Shtchukin in a pitiful voice, "I have the doctor's certificate that my husband was ill! Here it is, if you will kindly look at it."

"Very good, I believe you," Kistunov said irritably, "but I repeat it has nothing to do with us. It's queer and positively absurd! Surely your husband must know where you are to apply?"

"He knows nothing, your Excellency. He keeps on: 'It's not your business! Get away!'-that's all I can get out of him... Whose business is it, then? It's I have to keep them all!"

Kistunov again turned to Madame Shtchukin and began explaining to her the difference between the Army Medical Department and a private bank. She listened attentively, nodded in token of assent, and said:

"Yes... yes... yes... I understand, sir. In that case, your Excellency, tell them to pay me fifteen roubles at least! I agree to take part on account!"

"Ough!" sighed Kistunov, letting his head drop back. "There's no making you see reason. Do understand that to apply to us with such a petition is as strange as to send in a petition concerning divorce, for instance, to a chemist's or to the Assaying Board. You have not been paid your due, but what have we to do with it?"

"Your Excellency, make me remember you in my prayers for the rest of my days, have pity on a lone, lorn woman," wailed Madame Shtchukin; "I am a weak, defenceless woman... I am worried to death, I've to settle with the lodgers and see to my husband's affairs and fly round looking after the house, and I am going to church every day this week, and my son-in-law is out of a job... I might as well not eat or drink... I can scarcely keep on my feet... I haven't slept all night..."

Kistunov was conscious of the palpitation of his heart. With a face of anguish, pressing his hand on his heart, he began explaining to Madame Shtchukin again, but his voice failed him.

"No, excuse me, I cannot talk to you," he said with a wave of his hand. "My head's going round. You are hindering us and wasting your time. Ough! Alexey Nikolaitch," he said, addressing one of his clerks, "please will you explain to Madame Shtchukin?"

Kistunov, passing by all the petitioners, went to his private room and signed about a dozen papers while Alexey Nikolaitch was still engaged with

Madame Shtchukin. As he sat in his room Kistunov heard two voices: the monotonous, restrained bass of Alexey Nikolaitch and the shrill, wailing voice of Madame Shtchukin.

"I am a weak, defenceless woman, I am a woman in delicate health," said Madame Shtchukin. "I look strong, but if you were to overhaul me there is not one healthy fibre in me. I can scarcely keep on my feet, and my appetite is gone... I drank my cup of coffee this morning without the slightest relish..."

Alexey Nikolaitch explained to her the difference between the departments and the complicated system of sending in papers. He was soon exhausted, and his place was taken by the accountant.

"A wonderfully disagreeable woman!" said Kistunov, revolted, nervously cracking his fingers and continually going to the decanter of water. "She's a perfect idiot! She's worn me out and she'll exhaust them, the nasty creature! Ough!... my heart is throbbing."

Half an hour later he rang his bell. Alexey Nikolaitch made his appearance.

"How are things going?" Kistunov asked languidly.

"We can't make her see anything, Pyotr Alexandritch! We are simply done. We talk of one thing and she talks of something else."

"I... I can't stand the sound of her voice... I am ill
... I can't bear it."

"Send for the porter, Pyotr Alexandritch, let him put her out."

"No, no," cried Kistunov in alarm. "She will set up a squeal, and there are lots of flats in this building, and goodness knows what they would think of us... Do try and explain to her, my dear fellow..."

A minute later the deep drone of Alexey Nikolaitch's voice was audible again. A quarter of an hour passed, and instead of his bass there was the murmur of the accountant's powerful tenor.

"Re-mark-ably nasty woman," Kistunov thought indignantly, nervously shrugging his shoulders. "No more brains than a sheep. I believe that's a twinge of the gout again... My migraine is coming back..."

In the next room Alexey Nikolaitch, at the end of his resources, at last tapped his finger on the table and then on his own forehead.

"The fact of the matter is you haven't a head on your shoulders," he said, "but this."

"Come, come," said the old lady, offended. "Talk to your own wife like

that... You screw!... Don't be too free with your hands."

And looking at her with fury, with exasperation, as though he would devour her, Alexey Nikolaitch said in a quiet, stifled voice:

"Clear out."

"Wha-at?" squealed Madame Shtchukin. "How dare you? I am a weak, defenceless woman; I won't endure it. My husband is a collegiate assessor. You screw!... I will go to Dmitri Karlitch, the lawyer, and there will be nothing left of you! I've had the law of three lodgers, and I will make you flop down at my feet for your saucy words! I'll go to your general. Your Excellency, your Excellency!"

"Be off, you pest," hissed Alexey Nikolaitch.

Kistunov opened his door and looked into the office.

"What is it?" he asked in a tearful voice.

Madame Shtchukin, as red as a crab, was standing in the middle of the room, rolling her eyes and prodding the air with her fingers. The bank clerks were standing round red in the face too, and, evidently harassed, were looking at each other distractedly.

"Your Excellency," cried Madame Shtchukin, pouncing upon Kistunov. "Here, this man, he here... this man..." (she pointed to Alexey Nikolaitch) "tapped himself on the forehead and then tapped the table... You told him to go into my case, and he's jeering at me! I am a weak, defenceless woman... My husband is a collegiate assessor, and I am a major's daughter myself!"

"Very good, madam," moaned Kistunov. "I will go into it... I will take steps... Go away... later!"

"And when shall I get the money, your Excellency? I need it to-day!"

Kistunov passed his trembling hand over his forehead, heaved a sigh, and began explaining again.

"Madam, I have told you already this is a bank, a private commercial establishment... What do you want of us? And do understand that you are hindering us."

Madame Shtchukin listened to him and sighed.

"To be sure, to be sure," she assented. "Only, your Excellency, do me the kindness, make me pray for you for the rest of my life, be a father, protect me! If a medical certificate is not enough I can produce an affidavit from the police... Tell them to give me the money."

Everything began swimming before Kistunov's eyes. He breathed out all the air in his lungs in a prolonged sigh and sank helpless on a chair.

"How much do you want?" he asked in a weak voice.

"Twenty-four roubles and thirty-six kopecks."

Kistunov took his pocket-book out of his pocket, extracted a twenty-five rouble note and gave it to Madame Shtchukin.

"Take it and... and go away!"

Madame Shtchukin wrapped the money up in her handkerchief, put it away, and pursing up her face into a sweet, mincing, even coquettish smile, asked:

"Your Excellency, and would it be possible for my husband to get a post again?"

"I am going... I am ill..." said Kistunov in a weary voice.

"I have dreadful palpitations."

When he had driven home Alexey Nikolaitch sent Nikita for some laurel drops, and, after taking twenty drops each, all the clerks set to work, while Madame Shtchukin stayed another two hours in the vestibule, talking to the porter and waiting for Kistunov to return...

She came again next day.

AN ENIGMATIC NATURE

ON the red velvet seat of a first-class railway carriage a pretty lady sits half reclining. An expensive fluffy fan trembles in her tightly closed fingers, a pince-nez keeps dropping off her pretty little nose, the brooch heaves and falls on her bosom, like a boat on the ocean. She is greatly agitated.

On the seat opposite sits the Provincial Secretary of Special Commissions, a budding young author, who from time to time publishes long stories of high life, or "Novelli" as he calls them, in the leading paper of the province. He is gazing into her face, gazing intently, with the eyes of a connoisseur. He is watching, studying, catching every shade of this exceptional, enigmatic nature. He understands it, he fathoms it. Her soul, her whole psychology lies open before him.

"Oh, I understand, I understand you to your inmost depths!" says the Secretary of Special Commissions, kissing her hand near the bracelet. "Your sensitive, responsive soul is seeking to escape from the maze of – Yes, the struggle is terrific, titanic. But do not lose heart, you will be triumphant! Yes!"

"Write about me, Voldemar!" says the pretty lady, with a mournful smile. "My life has been so full, so varied, so chequered. Above all, I am unhappy. I am a suffering soul in some page of Dostoevsky. Reveal my soul to the world, Voldemar. Reveal that hapless soul. You are a psychologist. We have not been in the train an hour together, and you have already fathomed my heart."

"Tell me! I beseech you, tell me!"

"Listen. My father was a poor clerk in the Service. He had a good heart and was not without intelligence; but the spirit of the age-of his environment-*vous comprenez?* – I do not blame my poor father. He drank, gambled, took bribes. My mother-but why say more? Poverty, the struggle for daily bread, the consciousness of insignificance-ah, do not force me to recall it! I had to make my own way. You know the monstrous education at a boarding-school, foolish novel-reading, the errors of early youth, the first timid flutter of love. It was awful! The vacillation! And the agonies of losing faith in life, in oneself! Ah, you are an author. You know us women. You will understand. Unhappily I have an intense nature. I looked for happiness-and what happiness! I longed to set my soul free. Yes. In that I saw my happiness!"

"Exquisite creature!" murmured the author, kissing her hand close to the bracelet. "It's not you I am kissing, but the suffering of humanity. Do you remember Raskolnikov and his kiss?"

"Oh, Voldemar, I longed for glory, renown, success, like every-body affect modesty? – every nature above the commonplace. I yearned for something extraordinary, above the common lot of woman! And then-and then-there crossed my path-an old general-very well off. Understand me, Voldemar! It was self-sacrifice, renunciation! You must see that! I could do nothing else. I restored the family fortunes, was able to travel, to do good. Yet how I suffered, how revolting, how loathsome to me were his embraces-though I will be fair to him-he had fought nobly in his day. There were moments-terrible moments-but I was kept up by the thought that from day to day the old man might die, that then I would begin to live as I liked, to give myself to the man I adore-be happy. There is such a man, Voldemar, indeed there is!"

The pretty lady flutters her fan more violently. Her face takes a lachrymose expression. She goes on:

"But at last the old man died. He left me something. I was free as a bird of the air. Now is the moment for me to be happy, isn't it, Voldemar? Happiness comes tapping at my window, I had only to let it in-but-Voldemar, listen, I implore you! Now is the time for me to give myself to the man I love, to become the partner of his life, to help, to uphold his ideals, to be happy-to find rest-but-how ignoble, repulsive, and senseless all our life is! How mean it all is, Voldemar. I am wretched, wretched, wretched! Again there is an obstacle in my path! Again I feel that my happiness is far, far away! Ah, what anguish! – if only you knew what anguish!"

"But what-what stands in your way? I implore you tell me! What is it?"

"Another old general, very well off-"

The broken fan conceals the pretty little face. The author props on his fist his thought-heavy brow and ponders with the air of a master in psychology. The engine is whistling and hissing while the window curtains flush red with the glow of the setting sun.

A HAPPY MAN

THE passenger train is just starting from Bologoe, the junction on the Petersburg-Moscow line. In a second-class smoking compartment five passengers sit dozing, shrouded in the twilight of the carriage. They had just had a meal, and now, snugly ensconced in their seats, they are trying to go to sleep. Stillness.

The door opens and in there walks a tall, lanky figure straight as a poker, with a ginger-coloured hat and a smart overcoat, wonderfully suggestive of a journalist in Jules Verne or on the comic stage.

The figure stands still in the middle of the compartment for a long while, breathing heavily, screwing up his eyes and peering at the seats.

"No, wrong again!" he mutters. "What the deuce! It's positively revolting! No, the wrong one again!"

One of the passengers stares at the figure and utters a shout of joy:

"Ivan Alexyevitch! what brings you here? Is it you?"

The poker-like gentleman starts, stares blankly at the passenger, and recognizing him claps his hands with delight.

"Ha! Pyotr Petrovitch," he says. "How many summers, how many winters!

I didn't know you were in this train."

"How are you getting on?"

"I am all right; the only thing is, my dear fellow, I've lost my compartment and I simply can't find it. What an idiot I am! I ought to be thrashed!"

The poker-like gentleman sways a little unsteadily and sniggers.

"Queer things do happen!" he continues. "I stepped out just after the second bell to get a glass of brandy. I got it, of course. Well, I thought, since it's a long way to the next station, it would be as well to have a second glass. While I was thinking about it and drinking it the third bell rang... I ran like mad and jumped into the first carriage. I am an idiot! I am the son of a hen!"

"But you seem in very good spirits," observes Pyotr Petrovitch.

"Come and sit down! There's room and a welcome."

"No, no... I'm off to look for my carriage. Good-bye!"

"You'll fall between the carriages in the dark if you don't look out! Sit down, and when we get to a station you'll find your own compartment. Sit

down!"

Ivan Alexyevitch heaves a sigh and irresolutely sits down facing Pyotr Petrovitch. He is visibly excited, and fidgets as though he were sitting on thorns.

"Where are you travelling to?" Pyotr Petrovitch enquires.

"I? Into space. There is such a turmoil in my head that I couldn't tell where I am going myself. I go where fate takes me. Ha-ha! My dear fellow, have you ever seen a happy fool? No? Well, then, take a look at one. You behold the happiest of mortals! Yes! Don't you see something from my face?"

"Well, one can see you're a bit... a tiny bit so-so."

"I dare say I look awfully stupid just now. Ach! it's a pity I haven't a looking-glass, I should like to look at my counting-house. My dear fellow, I feel I am turning into an idiot, honour bright. Ha-ha! Would you believe it, I'm on my honeymoon. Am I not the son of a hen?"

"You? Do you mean to say you are married?"

"To-day, my dear boy. We came away straight after the wedding."

Congratulations and the usual questions follow. "Well, you are a fellow!" laughs Pyotr Petrovitch. "That's why you are rigged out such a dandy."

"Yes, indeed... To complete the illusion, I've even sprinkled myself with scent. I am over my ears in vanity! No care, no thought, nothing but a sensation of something or other... deuce knows what to call it... beatitude or something? I've never felt so grand in my life!"

Ivan Alexyevitch shuts his eyes and waggles his head.

"I'm revoltingly happy," he says. "Just think; in a minute I shall go to my compartment. There on the seat near the window is sitting a being who is, so to say, devoted to you with her whole being. A little blonde with a little nose... little fingers... My little darling! My angel! My little poppet! Phylloxera of my soul! And her little foot! Good God! A little foot not like our beetle-crushers, but something miniature, fairylike, allegorical. I could pick it up and eat it, that little foot! Oh, but you don't understand! You're a materialist, of course, you begin analyzing at once, and one thing and another. You are cold-hearted bachelors, that's what you are! When you get married you'll think of me. 'Where's Ivan Alexyevitch now?' you'll say. Yes; so in a minute I'm going to my compartment. There she is waiting for me with impatience... in joyful anticipation of my appearance. She'll have a smile to greet me. I sit down beside her and take her chin with my two fingers."

Ivan Alexyevitch waggles his head and goes off into a chuckle of delight.

"Then I lay my noddle on her shoulder and put my arm round her waist. Around all is silence, you know... poetic twilight. I could embrace the whole world at such a moment. Pyotr Petrovitch, allow me to embrace you!"

"Delighted, I'm sure." The two friends embrace while the passengers laugh in chorus. And the happy bridegroom continues:

"And to complete the idiocy, or, as the novelists say, to complete the illusion, one goes to the refreshment-room and tosses off two or three glasses. And then something happens in your head and your heart, finer than you can read of in a fairy tale. I am a man of no importance, but I feel as though I were limitless: I embrace the whole world!"

The passengers, looking at the tipsy and blissful bridegroom, are infected by his cheerfulness and no longer feel sleepy. Instead of one listener, Ivan Alexyevitch has now an audience of five. He wriggles and splutters, gesticulates, and prattles on without ceasing. He laughs and they all laugh.

"Gentlemen, gentlemen, don't think so much! Damn all this analysis! If you want a drink, drink, no need to philosophize as to whether it's bad for you or not... Damn all this philosophy and psychology!"

The guard walks through the compartment.

"My dear fellow," the bridegroom addresses him, "when you pass through the carriage No. 209 look out for a lady in a grey hat with a white bird and tell her I'm here!"

"Yes, sir. Only there isn't a No. 209 in this train; there's 219!"

"Well, 219, then! It's all the same. Tell that lady, then, that her husband is all right!"

Ivan Alexyevitch suddenly clutches his head and groans:

"Husband... Lady... All in a minute! Husband... Ha-ha! I am a puppy that needs thrashing, and here I am a husband! Ach, idiot! But think of her!... Yesterday she was a little girl, a midget... it's simply incredible!"

"Nowadays it really seems strange to see a happy man," observes one of the passengers; "one as soon expects to see a white elephant."

"Yes, and whose fault is it?" says Ivan Alexyevitch, stretching his long legs and thrusting out his feet with their very pointed toes. "If you are not happy it's your own fault! Yes, what else do you suppose it is? Man is the creator of his own happiness. If you want to be happy you will be, but you don't want to be! You obstinately turn away from happiness."

"Why, what next! How do you make that out?"

"Very simply. Nature has ordained that at a certain stage in his life man should love. When that time comes you should love like a house on fire, but you won't heed the dictates of nature, you keep waiting for something. What's more, it's laid down by law that the normal man should enter upon matrimony. There's no happiness without marriage. When the propitious moment has come, get married. There's no use in shilly-shallying... But you don't get married, you keep waiting for something! Then the Scriptures tell us that 'wine maketh glad the heart of man.'... If you feel happy and you want to feel better still, then go to the refreshment bar and have a drink. The great thing is not to be too clever, but to follow the beaten track! The beaten track is a grand thing!"

"You say that man is the creator of his own happiness. How the devil is he the creator of it when a toothache or an ill-natured mother-in-law is enough to scatter his happiness to the winds? Everything depends on chance. If we had an accident at this moment you'd sing a different tune."

"Stuff and nonsense!" retorts the bridegroom. "Railway accidents only happen once a year. I'm not afraid of an accident, for there is no reason for one. Accidents are exceptional! Confound them! I don't want to talk of them! Oh, I believe we're stopping at a station."

"Where are you going now?" asks Pyotr Petrovitch. "To Moscow or somewhere further south?"

"Why, bless you! How could I go somewhere further south, when I'm on my way to the north?"

"But Moscow isn't in the north."

"I know that, but we're on our way to Petersburg," says Ivan Alexyevitch.

"We are going to Moscow, mercy on us!"

"To Moscow? What do you mean?" says the bridegroom in amazement.

"It's queer... For what station did you take your ticket?"

"For Petersburg."

"In that case I congratulate you. You've got into the wrong train."

There follows a minute of silence. The bridegroom gets up and looks blankly round the company.

"Yes, yes," Pyotr Petrovitch explains. "You must have jumped into the wrong train at Bologoe... After your glass of brandy you succeeded in getting into the down-train."

Ivan Alexyevitch turns pale, clutches his head, and begins pacing rapidly

about the carriage.

"Ach, idiot that I am!" he says in indignation. "Scoundrel! The devil devour me! Whatever am I to do now? Why, my wife is in that train! She's there all alone, expecting me, consumed by anxiety. Ach, I'm a motley fool!"

The bridegroom falls on the seat and writhes as though someone had trodden on his corns.

"I am un-unhappy man!" he moans. "What am I to do, what am I to do?"

"There, there!" the passengers try to console him. "It's all right

... You must telegraph to your wife and try to change into the

Petersburg express. In that way you'll overtake her."

"The Petersburg express!" weeps the bridegroom, the creator of his own happiness. "And how am I to get a ticket for the Petersburg express? All my money is with my wife."

The passengers, laughing and whispering together, make a collection and furnish the happy man with funds.

A TROUBLESOME VISITOR

IN the low-pitched, crooked little hut of Artyom, the forester, two men were sitting under the big dark ikon-Artyom himself, a short and lean peasant with a wrinkled, aged-looking face and a little beard that grew out of his neck, and a well-grown young man in a new crimson shirt and big wading boots, who had been out hunting and come in for the night. They were sitting on a bench at a little three-legged table on which a tallow candle stuck into a bottle was lazily burning.

Outside the window the darkness of the night was full of the noisy uproar into which nature usually breaks out before a thunderstorm. The wind howled angrily and the bowed trees moaned miserably. One pane of the window had been pasted up with paper, and leaves torn off by the wind could be heard pattering against the paper.

"I tell you what, good Christian," said Artyom in a hoarse little tenor half-whisper, staring with unblinking, scared-looking eyes at the hunter. "I am not afraid of wolves or bears, or wild beasts of any sort, but I am afraid of man. You can save yourself from beasts with a gun or some other weapon, but you have no means of saving yourself from a wicked man."

"To be sure, you can fire at a beast, but if you shoot at a robber you will have to answer for it: you will go to Siberia."

"I've been forester, my lad, for thirty years, and I couldn't tell you what I have had to put up with from wicked men. There have been lots and lots of them here. The hut's on a track, it's a cart-road, and that brings them, the devils. Every sort of ruffian turns up, and without taking off his cap or making the sign of the cross, bursts straight in upon one with: 'Give us some bread, you old so-and-so.' And where am I to get bread for him? What claim has he? Am I a millionaire to feed every drunkard that passes? They are half-blind with spite... They have no cross on them, the devils... They'll give you a clout on the ear and not think twice about it: 'Give us bread!' Well, one gives it... One is not going to fight with them, the idols! Some of them are two yards across the shoulders, and a great fist as big as your boot, and you see the sort of figure I am. One of them could smash me with his little finger... Well, one gives him bread and he gobbles it up, and stretches out full length across the hut with not a word of thanks. And there are some that ask for money. 'Tell me, where is your money?' As though I had money! How

should I come by it?"

"A forester and no money!" laughed the hunter. "You get wages every month, and I'll be bound you sell timber on the sly."

Artyom took a timid sideways glance at his visitor and twitched his beard as a magpie twitches her tail.

"You are still young to say a thing like that to me," he said. "You will have to answer to God for those words. Whom may your people be? Where do you come from?"

"I am from Vyazovka. I am the son of Nefed the village elder."

"You have gone out for sport with your gun. I used to like sport, too, when I was young. H'm! Ah, our sins are grievous," said Artyom, with a yawn. "It's a sad thing! There are few good folks, but villains and murderers no end-God have mercy upon us."

"You seem to be frightened of me, too..."

"Come, what next! What should I be afraid of you for? I see... I understand... You came in, and not just anyhow, but you made the sign of the cross, you bowed, all decent and proper... I understand... One can give you bread... I am a widower, I don't heat the stove, I sold the samovar... I am too poor to keep meat or anything else, but bread you are welcome to."

At that moment something began growling under the bench: the growl was followed by a hiss. Artyom started, drew up his legs, and looked enquiringly at the hunter.

"It's my dog worrying your cat," said the hunter. "You devils!" he shouted under the bench. "Lie down. You'll be beaten. I say, your cat's thin, mate! She is nothing but skin and bone."

"She is old, it is time she was dead... So you say you are from Vyazovka?"

"I see you don't feed her. Though she's a cat she's a creature... every breathing thing. You should have pity on her!"

"You are a queer lot in Vyazovka," Artyom went on, as though not listening. "The church has been robbed twice in one year... To think that there are such wicked men! So they fear neither man nor God! To steal what is the Lord's! Hanging's too good for them! In old days the governors used to have such rogues flogged."

"However you punish, whether it is with flogging or anything else, it will be no good, you will not knock the wickedness out of a wicked man."

"Save and preserve us, Queen of Heaven!" The forester sighed abruptly.

"Save us from all enemies and evildoers. Last week at Volovy Zaimishtchy, a mower struck another on the chest with his scythe... he killed him outright! And what was it all about, God bless me! One mower came out of the tavern... drunk. The other met him, drunk too."

The young man, who had been listening attentively, suddenly started, and his face grew tense as he listened.

"Stay," he said, interrupting the forester. "I fancy someone is shouting."

The hunter and the forester fell to listening with their eyes fixed on the window. Through the noise of the forest they could hear sounds such as the strained ear can always distinguish in every storm, so that it was difficult to make out whether people were calling for help or whether the wind was wailing in the chimney. But the wind tore at the roof, tapped at the paper on the window, and brought a distinct shout of "Help!"

"Talk of your murderers," said the hunter, turning pale and getting up. "Someone is being robbed!"

"Lord have mercy on us," whispered the forester, and he, too, turned pale and got up.

The hunter looked aimlessly out of window and walked up and down the hut.

"What a night, what a night!" he muttered. "You can't see your hand before your face! The very time for a robbery. Do you hear? There is a shout again."

The forester looked at the ikon and from the ikon turned his eyes upon the hunter, and sank on to the bench, collapsing like a man terrified by sudden bad news.

"Good Christian," he said in a tearful voice, "you might go into the passage and bolt the door. And we must put out the light."

"What for?"

"By ill-luck they may find their way here... Oh, our sins!"

"We ought to be going, and you talk of bolting the door! You are a clever one! Are you coming?"

The hunter threw his gun over his shoulder and picked up his cap.

"Get ready, take your gun. Hey, Flerka, here," he called to his dog. "Flerka!"

A dog with long frayed ears, a mongrel between a setter and a house-dog, came out from under the bench. He stretched himself by his master's feet and wagged his tail.

"Why are you sitting there?" cried the hunter to the forester. "You mean to say you are not going?"

"Where?"

"To help!"

"How can I?" said the forester with a wave of his hand, shuddering all over. "I can't bother about it!"

"Why won't you come?"

"After talking of such dreadful things I won't stir a step into the darkness. Bless them! And what should I go for?"

"What are you afraid of? Haven't you got a gun? Let us go, please do. It's scaring to go alone; it will be more cheerful, the two of us. Do you hear? There was a shout again. Get up!"

"Whatever do you think of me, lad?" wailed the forester. "Do you think I am such a fool to go straight to my undoing?"

"So you are not coming?"

The forester did not answer. The dog, probably hearing a human cry, gave a plaintive whine.

"Are you coming, I ask you?" cried the hunter, rolling his eyes angrily.

"You do keep on, upon my word," said the forester with annoyance.

"Go yourself."

"Ugh!... low cur," growled the hunter, turning towards the door.

"Flerka, here!"

He went out and left the door open. The wind flew into the hut. The flame of the candle flickered uneasily, flared up, and went out.

As he bolted the door after the hunter, the forester saw the puddles in the track, the nearest pine-trees, and the retreating figure of his guest lighted up by a flash of lightning. Far away he heard the rumble of thunder.

"Holy, holy, holy," whispered the forester, making haste to thrust the thick bolt into the great iron rings. "What weather the Lord has sent us!"

Going back into the room, he felt his way to the stove, lay down, and covered himself from head to foot. Lying under the sheepskin and listening intently, he could no longer hear the human cry, but the peals of thunder kept growing louder and more prolonged. He could hear the big wind-lashed raindrops pattering angrily on the panes and on the paper of the window.

"He's gone on a fool's errand," he thought, picturing the hunter soaked with rain and stumbling over the tree-stumps. "I bet his teeth are chattering with terror!"

Not more than ten minutes later there was a sound of footsteps, followed by a loud knock at the door.

"Who's there?" cried the forester.

"It's I," he heard the young man's voice. "Unfasten the door."

The forester clambered down from the stove, felt for the candle, and, lighting it, went to the door. The hunter and his dog were drenched to the skin. They had come in for the heaviest of the downpour, and now the water ran from them as from washed clothes before they have been wrung out.

"What was it?" asked the forester.

"A peasant woman driving in a cart; she had got off the road..." answered the young man, struggling with his breathlessness. "She was caught in a thicket."

"Ah, the silly thing! She was frightened, then... Well, did you put her on the road?"

"I don't care to talk to a scoundrel like you."

The young man flung his wet cap on the bench and went on:

"I know now that you are a scoundrel and the lowest of men. And you a keeper, too, getting a salary! You blackguard!"

The forester slunk with a guilty step to the stove, cleared his throat, and lay down. The young man sat on the bench, thought a little, and lay down on it full length. Not long afterwards he got up, put out the candle, and lay down again. During a particularly loud clap of thunder he turned over, spat on the floor, and growled out:

"He's afraid... And what if the woman were being murdered? Whose business is it to defend her? And he an old man, too, and a Christian... He's a pig and nothing else."

The forester cleared his throat and heaved a deep sigh. Somewhere in the darkness Flerka shook his wet coat vigorously, which sent drops of water flying about all over the room.

"So you wouldn't care if the woman were murdered?" the hunter went on. "Well-strike me, God-I had no notion you were that sort of man..."

A silence followed. The thunderstorm was by now over and the thunder came from far away, but it was still raining.

"And suppose it hadn't been a woman but you shouting 'Help!'" said the hunter, breaking the silence. "How would you feel, you beast, if no one ran to your aid? You have upset me with your meanness, plague take you!"

After another long interval the hunter said:

"You must have money to be afraid of people! A man who is poor is not likely to be afraid..."

"For those words you will answer before God," Artyom said hoarsely from the stove. "I have no money."

"I dare say! Scoundrels always have money... Why are you afraid of people, then? So you must have! I'd like to take and rob you for spite, to teach you a lesson!..."

Artyom slipped noiselessly from the stove, lighted a candle, and sat down under the holy image. He was pale and did not take his eyes off the hunter.

"Here, I'll rob you," said the hunter, getting up. "What do you think about it? Fellows like you want a lesson. Tell me, where is your money hidden?"

Artyom drew his legs up under him and blinked. "What are you wriggling for? Where is your money hidden? Have you lost your tongue, you fool? Why don't you answer?"

The young man jumped up and went up to the forester.

"He is blinking like an owl! Well? Give me your money, or I will shoot you with my gun."

"Why do you keep on at me?" squealed the forester, and big tears rolled from his eyes. "What's the reason of it? God sees all! You will have to answer, for every word you say, to God. You have no right whatever to ask for my money."

The young man looked at Artyom's tearful face, frowned, and walked up and down the hut, then angrily clapped his cap on his head and picked up his gun.

"Ugh!... ugh!... it makes me sick to look at you," he filtered through his teeth. "I can't bear the sight of you. I won't sleep in your house, anyway. Good-bye! Hey, Flerka!"

The door slammed and the troublesome visitor went out with his dog... Artyom bolted the door after him, crossed himself, and lay down.

AN ACTOR'S END

SHTCHIPTSOV, the "heavy father" and "good-hearted simpleton," a tall and thick-set old man, not so much distinguished by his talents as an actor as by his exceptional physical strength, had a desperate quarrel with the manager during the performance, and just when the storm of words was at its height felt as though something had snapped in his chest. Zhukov, the manager, as a rule began at the end of every heated discussion to laugh hysterically and to fall into a swoon; on this occasion, however, Shtchiptsov did not remain for this climax, but hurried home. The high words and the sensation of something ruptured in his chest so agitated him as he left the theatre that he forgot to wash off his paint, and did nothing but take off his beard.

When he reached his hotel room, Shtchiptsov spent a long time pacing up and down, then sat down on the bed, propped his head on his fists, and sank into thought. He sat like that without stirring or uttering a sound till two o'clock the next afternoon, when Sigaev, the comic man, walked into his room.

"Why is it you did not come to the rehearsal, Booby Ivanitch?" the comic man began, panting and filling the room with fumes of vodka. "Where have you been?"

Shtchiptsov made no answer, but simply stared at the comic man with lustreless eyes, under which there were smudges of paint.

"You might at least have washed your phiz!" Sigaev went on. "You are a disgraceful sight! Have you been boozing, or... are you ill, or what? But why don't you speak? I am asking you: are you ill?"

Shtchiptsov did not speak. In spite of the paint on his face, the comic man could not help noticing his striking pallor, the drops of sweat on his forehead, and the twitching of his lips. His hands and feet were trembling too, and the whole huge figure of the "good-natured simpleton" looked somehow crushed and flattened. The comic man took a rapid glance round the room, but saw neither bottle nor flask nor any other suspicious vessel.

"I say, Mishutka, you know you are ill!" he said in a flutter.

"Strike me dead, you are ill! You don't look yourself!"

Shtchiptsov remained silent and stared disconsolately at the floor.

"You must have caught cold," said Sigaev, taking him by the hand.

"Oh, dear, how hot your hands are! What's the trouble?"

"I wa-ant to go home," muttered Shtchiptsov.

"But you are at home now, aren't you?"

"No... To Vyazma..."

"Oh, my, anywhere else! It would take you three years to get to your Vyazma... What? do you want to go and see your daddy and mummy? I'll be bound, they've kicked the bucket years ago, and you won't find their graves..."

"My ho-ome's there."

"Come, it's no good giving way to the dismal dumps. These neurotic feelings are the limit, old man. You must get well, for you have to play Mitka in 'The Terrible Tsar' to-morrow. There is nobody else to do it. Drink something hot and take some castor-oil? Have you got the money for some castor-oil? Or, stay, I'll run and buy some."

The comic man fumbled in his pockets, found a fifteen-kopeck piece, and ran to the chemist's. A quarter of an hour later he came back.

"Come, drink it," he said, holding the bottle to the "heavy father's" mouth. "Drink it straight out of the bottle... All at a go! That's the way... Now nibble at a clove that your very soul mayn't stink of the filthy stuff."

The comic man sat a little longer with his sick friend, then kissed him tenderly, and went away. Towards evening the *jeune premier*, Brama-Glinsky, ran in to see Shtchiptsov. The gifted actor was wearing a pair of prunella boots, had a glove on his left hand, was smoking a cigar, and even smelt of heliotrope, yet nevertheless he strongly suggested a traveller cast away in some land in which there were neither baths nor laundresses nor tailors...

"I hear you are ill?" he said to Shtchiptsov, twirling round on his heel. "What's wrong with you? What's wrong with you, really?..."

Shtchiptsov did not speak nor stir.

"Why don't you speak? Do you feel giddy? Oh well, don't talk, I won't pester you... don't talk..."

Brama-Glinsky (that was his stage name, in his passport he was called Guskov) walked away to the window, put his hands in his pockets, and fell to gazing into the street. Before his eyes stretched an immense waste, bounded by a grey fence beside which ran a perfect forest of last year's burdocks. Beyond the waste ground was a dark, deserted factory, with windows boarded up. A belated jackdaw was flying round the chimney. This dreary,

lifeless scene was beginning to be veiled in the dusk of evening.

"I must go home!" the *jeune premier* heard.

"Where is home?"

"To Vyazma... to my home..."

"It is a thousand miles to Vyazma... my boy," sighed Brama-Glinsky, drumming on the window-pane. "And what do you want to go to Vyazma for?"

"I want to die there."

"What next! Now he's dying! He has fallen ill for the first time in his life, and already he fancies that his last hour is come... No, my boy, no cholera will carry off a buffalo like you. You'll live to be a hundred... Where's the pain?"

"There's no pain, but I... feel..."

"You don't feel anything, it all comes from being too healthy. Your surplus energy upsets you. You ought to get jolly tight-drunk, you know, till your whole inside is topsy-turvy. Getting drunk is wonderfully restoring... Do you remember how screwed you were at Rostov on the Don? Good Lord, the very thought of it is alarming! Sashka and I together could only just carry in the barrel, and you emptied it alone, and even sent for rum afterwards... You got so drunk you were catching devils in a sack and pulled a lamp-post up by the roots. Do you remember? Then you went off to beat the Greeks..."

Under the influence of these agreeable reminiscences Shtchiptsov's face brightened a little and his eyes began to shine.

"And do you remember how I beat Savoikin the manager?" he muttered, raising his head. "But there! I've beaten thirty-three managers in my time, and I can't remember how many smaller fry. And what managers they were! Men who would not permit the very winds to touch them! I've beaten two celebrated authors and one painter!"

"What are you crying for?"

"At Kherson I killed a horse with my fists. And at Taganrog some roughs fell upon me at night, fifteen of them. I took off their caps and they followed me, begging: 'Uncle, give us back our caps.' That's how I used to go on."

"What are you crying for, then, you silly?"

"But now it's all over... I feel it. If only I could go to Vyazma!"

A pause followed. After a silence Shtchiptsov suddenly jumped up and seized his cap. He looked distraught.

"Good-bye! I am going to Vyazma!" he articulated, staggering.

"And the money for the journey?"

"H'm!... I shall go on foot!"

"You are crazy..."

The two men looked at each other, probably because the same thought-of the boundless plains, the unending forests and swamps-struck both of them at once.

"Well, I see you have gone off your head," the *jeune premier* commented. "I'll tell you what, old man... First thing, go to bed, then drink some brandy and tea to put you into a sweat. And some castor-oil, of course. Stay, where am I to get some brandy?"

Brama-Glinsky thought a minute, then made up his mind to go to a shopkeeper called Madame Tsitrinnikov to try and get it from her on tick: who knows? perhaps the woman would feel for them and let them have it. The *jeune premier* went off, and half an hour later returned with a bottle of brandy and some castor-oil. Shtchiptsov was sitting motionless, as before, on the bed, gazing dumbly at the floor. He drank the castor-oil offered him by his friend like an automaton, with no consciousness of what he was doing. Like an automaton he sat afterwards at the table, and drank tea and brandy; mechanically he emptied the whole bottle and let the *jeune premier* put him to bed. The latter covered him up with a quilt and an overcoat, advised him to get into a perspiration, and went away.

The night came on; Shtchiptsov had drunk a great deal of brandy, but he did not sleep. He lay motionless under the quilt and stared at the dark ceiling; then, seeing the moon looking in at the window, he turned his eyes from the ceiling towards the companion of the earth, and lay so with open eyes till the morning. At nine o'clock in the morning Zhukov, the manager, ran in.

"What has put it into your head to be ill, my angel?" he cackled, wrinkling up his nose. "Aie, aie! A man with your physique has no business to be ill! For shame, for shame! Do you know, I was quite frightened. 'Can our conversation have had such an effect on him?' I wondered. My dear soul, I hope it's not through me you've fallen ill! You know you gave me as good... er... And, besides, comrades can never get on without words. You called me all sorts of names... and have gone at me with your fists too, and yet I am fond of you! Upon my soul, I am. I respect you and am fond of you! Explain, my angel, why I am so fond of you. You are neither kith nor kin nor wife, but as soon as I heard you had fallen ill it cut me to the heart."

Zhukov spent a long time declaring his affection, then fell to kissing the invalid, and finally was so overcome by his feelings that he began laughing hysterically, and was even meaning to fall into a swoon, but, probably remembering that he was not at home nor at the theatre, put off the swoon to a more convenient opportunity and went away.

Soon after him Adabashev, the tragic actor, a dingy, short-sighted individual who talked through his nose, made his appearance... For a long while he looked at Shtchiptsov, for a long while he pondered, and at last he made a discovery.

"Do you know what, Mifa?" he said, pronouncing through his nose "f" instead of "sh," and assuming a mysterious expression. "Do you know what? You ought to have a dose of castor-oil!"

Shtchiptsov was silent. He remained silent, too, a little later as the tragic actor poured the loathsome oil into his mouth. Two hours later Yevlampy, or, as the actors for some reason called him, Rigoletto, the hairdresser of the company, came into the room. He too, like the tragic man, stared at Shtchiptsov for a long time, then sighed like a steam-engine, and slowly and deliberately began untying a parcel he had brought with him. In it there were twenty cups and several little flasks.

"You should have sent for me and I would have cupped you long ago," he said, tenderly baring Shtchiptsov's chest. "It is easy to neglect illness."

Thereupon Rigoletto stroked the broad chest of the "heavy father" and covered it all over with suction cups.

"Yes..." he said, as after this operation he packed up his paraphernalia, crimson with Shtchiptsov's blood. "You should have sent for me, and I would have come... You needn't trouble about payment... I do it from sympathy. Where are you to get the money if that idol won't pay you? Now, please take these drops. They are nice drops! And now you must have a dose of this castor-oil. It's the real thing. That's right! I hope it will do you good. Well, now, good-bye..."

Rigoletto took his parcel and withdrew, pleased that he had been of assistance to a fellow-creature.

The next morning Sigaev, the comic man, going in to see Shtchiptsov, found him in a terrible condition. He was lying under his coat, breathing in gasps, while his eyes strayed over the ceiling. In his hands he was crushing convulsively the crumpled quilt.

"To Vyazma!" he whispered, when he saw the comic man. "To Vyazma."

"Come, I don't like that, old man!" said the comic man, flinging up his hands. "You see... you see... you see, old man, that's not the thing! Excuse me, but... it's positively stupid..."

"To go to Vyazma! My God, to Vyazma!"

"I... I did not expect it of you," the comic man muttered, utterly distracted. "What the deuce do you want to collapse like this for? Aie... aie... aie!... that's not the thing. A giant as tall as a watch-tower, and crying. Is it the thing for actors to cry?"

"No wife nor children," muttered Shtchiptsov. "I ought not to have gone for an actor, but have stayed at Vyazma. My life has been wasted, Semyon! Oh, to be in Vyazma!"

"Aie... aie... aie!... that's not the thing! You see, it's stupid... contemptible indeed!"

Recovering his composure and setting his feelings in order, Sigaev began comforting Shtchiptsov, telling him untruly that his comrades had decided to send him to the Crimea at their expense, and so on, but the sick man did not listen and kept muttering about Vyazma... At last, with a wave of his hand, the comic man began talking about Vyazma himself to comfort the invalid.

"It's a fine town," he said soothingly, "a capital town, old man! It's famous for its cakes. The cakes are classical, but-between ourselves-h'm! – they are a bit groggy. For a whole week after eating them I was... h'm!... But what is fine there is the merchants! They are something like merchants. When they treat you they do treat you!"

The comic man talked while Shtchiptsov listened in silence and nodded his head approvingly.

Towards evening he died.

A COUNTRY COTTAGE

Two young people who had not long been married were walking up and down the platform of a little country station. His arm was round her waist, her head was almost on his shoulder, and both were happy.

The moon peeped up from the drifting cloudlets and frowned, as it seemed, envying their happiness and regretting her tedious and utterly superfluous virginity. The still air was heavy with the fragrance of lilac and wild cherry. Somewhere in the distance beyond the line a corncrake was calling.

"How beautiful it is, Sasha, how beautiful!" murmured the young wife. "It all seems like a dream. See, how sweet and inviting that little copse looks! How nice those solid, silent telegraph posts are! They add a special note to the landscape, suggesting humanity, civilization in the distance... Don't you think it's lovely when the wind brings the rushing sound of a train?"

"Yes... But what hot little hands you've got... That's because you're excited, Varya... What have you got for our supper to-night?"

"Chicken and salad... It's a chicken just big enough for two... Then there is the salmon and sardines that were sent from town."

The moon as though she had taken a pinch of snuff hid her face behind a cloud. Human happiness reminded her of her own loneliness, of her solitary couch beyond the hills and dales.

"The train is coming!" said Varya, "how jolly!"

Three eyes of fire could be seen in the distance. The stationmaster came out on the platform. Signal lights flashed here and there on the line.

"Let's see the train in and go home," said Sasha, yawning. "What a splendid time we are having together, Varya, it's so splendid, one can hardly believe it's true!"

The dark monster crept noiselessly alongside the platform and came to a standstill. They caught glimpses of sleepy faces, of hats and shoulders at the dimly lighted windows.

"Look! look!" they heard from one of the carriages. "Varya and Sasha have come to meet us! There they are!... Varya!... Varya... Look!"

Two little girls skipped out of the train and hung on Varya's neck. They were followed by a stout, middle-aged lady, and a tall, lanky gentleman with grey whiskers; behind them came two schoolboys, laden with bags, and after

the schoolboys, the governess, after the governess the grandmother.

"Here we are, here we are, dear boy!" began the whiskered gentleman, squeezing Sasha's hand. "Sick of waiting for us, I expect! You have been pitching into your old uncle for not coming down all this time, I daresay! Kolya, Kostya, Nina, Fifa... children! Kiss your cousin Sasha! We're all here, the whole troop of us, just for three or four days... I hope we shan't be too many for you? You mustn't let us put you out!"

At the sight of their uncle and his family, the young couple were horror-stricken. While his uncle talked and kissed them, Sasha had a vision of their little cottage: he and Varya giving up their three little rooms, all the pillows and bedding to their guests; the salmon, the sardines, the chicken all devoured in a single instant; the cousins plucking the flowers in their little garden, spilling the ink, filled the cottage with noise and confusion; his aunt talking continually about her ailments and her papa's having been Baron von Fintich...

And Sasha looked almost with hatred at his young wife, and whispered:

"It's you they've come to see!... Damn them!"

"No, it's you," answered Varya, pale with anger. "They're your relations! they're not mine!"

And turning to her visitors, she said with a smile of welcome:

"Welcome to the cottage!"

The moon came out again. She seemed to smile, as though she were glad she had no relations. Sasha, turning his head away to hide his angry despairing face, struggled to give a note of cordial welcome to his voice as he said:

"It is jolly of you! Welcome to the cottage!"

FAT AND THIN

Two friends—one a fat man and the other a thin man—met at the Nikolaevsky station. The fat man had just dined in the station and his greasy lips shone like ripe cherries. He smelt of sherry and *fleur d'orange*. The thin man had just slipped out of the train and was laden with portmanteaus, bundles, and bandboxes. He smelt of ham and coffee grounds. A thin woman with a long chin, his wife, and a tall schoolboy with one eye screwed up came into view behind his back.

"Porfiry," cried the fat man on seeing the thin man. "Is it you?

My dear fellow! How many summers, how many winters!"

"Holy saints!" cried the thin man in amazement. "Misha! The friend of my childhood! Where have you dropped from?"

The friends kissed each other three times, and gazed at each other with eyes full of tears. Both were agreeably astounded.

"My dear boy!" began the thin man after the kissing. "This is unexpected! This is a surprise! Come have a good look at me! Just as handsome as I used to be! Just as great a darling and a dandy! Good gracious me! Well, and how are you? Made your fortune? Married? I am married as you see... This is my wife Luise, her maiden name was Vantsenbach... of the Lutheran persuasion... And this is my son Nafanail, a schoolboy in the third class. This is the friend of my childhood, Nafanya. We were boys at school together!"

Nafanail thought a little and took off his cap.

"We were boys at school together," the thin man went on. "Do you remember how they used to tease you? You were nicknamed Herostratus because you burned a hole in a schoolbook with a cigarette, and I was nicknamed Ephialtes because I was fond of telling tales. Ho-ho!... we were children!... Don't be shy, Nafanya. Go nearer to him. And this is my wife, her maiden name was Vantsenbach, of the Lutheran persuasion..."

Nafanail thought a little and took refuge behind his father's back.

"Well, how are you doing my friend?" the fat man asked, looking enthusiastically at his friend. "Are you in the service? What grade have you reached?"

"I am, dear boy! I have been a collegiate assessor for the last two years and I have the Stanislav. The salary is poor, but that's no great matter! The wife gives music lessons, and I go in for carving wooden cigarette cases in a

private way. Capital cigarette cases! I sell them for a rouble each. If any one takes ten or more I make a reduction of course. We get along somehow. I served as a clerk, you know, and now I have been transferred here as a head clerk in the same department. I am going to serve here. And what about you? I bet you are a civil councillor by now? Eh?"

"No dear boy, go higher than that," said the fat man. "I have risen to privy councillor already... I have two stars."

The thin man turned pale and rigid all at once, but soon his face twisted in all directions in the broadest smile; it seemed as though sparks were flashing from his face and eyes. He squirmed, he doubled together, crumpled up... His portmanteaus, bundles and cardboard boxes seemed to shrink and crumple up too... His wife's long chin grew longer still; Nafanail drew himself up to attention and fastened all the buttons of his uniform.

"Your Excellency, I... delighted! The friend, one may say, of childhood and to have turned into such a great man! He-he!"

"Come, come!" the fat man frowned. "What's this tone for? You and I were friends as boys, and there is no need of this official obsequiousness!"

"Merciful heavens, your Excellency! What are you saying...?" sniggered the thin man, wriggling more than ever. "Your Excellency's gracious attention is like refreshing manna... This, your Excellency, is my son Nafanail,... my wife Luise, a Lutheran in a certain sense."

The fat man was about to make some protest, but the face of the thin man wore an expression of such reverence, sugariness, and mawkish respectfulness that the privy councillor was sickened. He turned away from the thin man, giving him his hand at parting.

The thin man pressed three fingers, bowed his whole body and sniggered like a Chinaman: "He-he-he!" His wife smiled. Nafanail scraped with his foot and dropped his cap. All three were agreeably overwhelmed.

NERVES

DMITRI OSIPOVITCH VAXIN, the architect, returned from town to his holiday cottage greatly impressed by the spiritualistic séance at which he had been present. As he undressed and got into his solitary bed (Madame Vaxin had gone to an all-night service) he could not help remembering all he had seen and heard. It had not, properly speaking, been a séance at all, but the whole evening had been spent in terrifying conversation. A young lady had begun it by talking, apropos of nothing, about thought-reading. From thought-reading they had passed imperceptibly to spirits, and from spirits to ghosts, from ghosts to people buried alive... A gentleman had read a horrible story of a corpse turning round in the coffin. Vaxin himself had asked for a saucer and shown the young ladies how to converse with spirits. He had called up among others the spirit of his deceased uncle, Klavdy Mironitch, and had mentally asked him:

"Has not the time come for me to transfer the ownership of our house to my wife?"

To which his uncle's spirit had replied:

"All things are good in their season."

"There is a great deal in nature that is mysterious and... terrible..." thought Vaxin, as he got into bed. "It's not the dead but the unknown that's so horrible."

It struck one o'clock. Vaxin turned over on the other side and peeped out from beneath the bedclothes at the blue light of the lamp burning before the holy ikon. The flame flickered and cast a faint light on the ikon-stand and the big portrait of Uncle Klavdy that hung facing his bed.

"And what if the ghost of Uncle Klavdy should appear this minute?" flashed through Vaxin's mind. "But, of course, that's impossible."

Ghosts are, we all know, a superstition, the offspring of undeveloped intelligence, but Vaxin, nevertheless, pulled the bed-clothes over his head, and shut his eyes very tight. The corpse that turned round in its coffin came back to his mind, and the figures of his deceased mother-in-law, of a colleague who had hanged himself, and of a girl who had drowned herself, rose before his imagination... Vaxin began trying to dispel these gloomy ideas, but the more he tried to drive them away the more haunting the figures and fearful fancies became. He began to feel frightened.

"Hang it all!" he thought. "Here I am afraid in the dark like a child! Idiotic!"

Tick... tick... tick... he heard the clock in the next room. The church-bell chimed the hour in the churchyard close by. The bell tolled slowly, depressingly, mournfully... A cold chill ran down Vaxin's neck and spine. He fancied he heard someone breathing heavily over his head, as though Uncle Klavdy had stepped out of his frame and was bending over his nephew... Vaxin felt unbearably frightened. He clenched his teeth and held his breath in terror.

At last, when a cockchafer flew in at the open window and began buzzing over his bed, he could bear it no longer and gave a violent tug at the bellrope.

"Dmitri Osipitch, *was wollen Sie?* " he heard the voice of the German governess at his door a moment later.

"Ah, it's you, Rosalia Karlovna!" Vaxin cried, delighted. "Why do you trouble? Gavrila might just..."

"Yourself Gavrila to the town sent. And Glafira is somewhere all the evening gone... There's nobody in the house... *Was wollen Sie doch?* "

"Well, what I wanted... it's... but, please, come in... you needn't mind!... it's dark."

Rosalia Karlovna, a stout red-cheeked person, came in to the bedroom and stood in an expectant attitude at the door.

"Sit down, please... you see, it's like this... What on earth am I to ask her for?" he wondered, stealing a glance at Uncle Klavdy's portrait and feeling his soul gradually returning to tranquility.

"What I really wanted to ask you was... Oh, when the man goes to town, don't forget to tell him to... er... er... to get some cigarette-papers... But do, please sit down."

"Cigarette-papers? good... *Was wollen Sie noch?* "

"*Ich will...* there's nothing I will, but... But do sit down! I shall think of something else in a minute."

"It is shocking for a maiden in a man's room to remain... Mr. Vaxin, you are, I see, a naughty man... I understand... To order cigarette-papers one does not a person wake... I understand you..."

Rosalia Karlovna turned and went out of the room.

Somewhat reassured by his conversation with her and ashamed of his cowardice, Vaxin pulled the bedclothes over his head and shut his eyes. For about ten minutes he felt fairly comfortable, then the same nonsense came

creeping back into his mind... He swore to himself, felt for the matches, and without opening his eyes lighted a candle.

But even the light was no use. To Vaxin's excited imagination it seemed as though someone were peeping round the corner and that his uncle's eyes were moving.

"I'll ring her up again... damn the woman!" he decided. "I'll tell her I'm unwell and ask for some drops."

Vaxin rang. There was no response. He rang again, and as though answering his ring, he heard the church-bell toll the hour.

Overcome with terror, cold all over, he jumped out of bed, ran headlong out of his bedroom, and making the sign of the cross and cursing himself for his cowardice, he fled barefoot in his night-shirt to the governess's room.

"Rosalia Karlovna!" he began in a shaking voice as he knocked at her door, "Rosalia Karlovna!... Are you asleep?... I feel... so... er... er... unwell... Drops!..."

There was no answer. Silence reigned.

"I beg you... do you understand? I beg you! Why this squeamishness, I can't understand... especially when a man... is ill..."

How absurdly *zierlich manierlich* you are really... at your age..."

"I to your wife shall tell... Will not leave an honest maiden in peace... When I was at Baron Anzig's, and the baron try to come to me for matches, I understand at once what his matches mean and tell to the baroness... I am an honest maiden."

"Hang your honesty! I am ill I tell you... and asking you for drops. Do you understand? I'm ill!"

"Your wife is an honest, good woman, and you ought her to love! *Ja!* She is noble!... I will not be her foe!"

"You are a fool! simply a fool! Do you understand, a fool?"

Vaxin leaned against the door-post, folded his arms and waited for his panic to pass off. To return to his room where the lamp flickered and his uncle stared at him from his frame was more than he could face, and to stand at the governess's door in nothing but his night-shirt was inconvenient from every point of view. What could he do?

It struck two o'clock and his terror had not left him. There was no light in the passage and something dark seemed to be peeping out from every corner. Vaxin turned so as to face the door-post, but at that instant it seemed as

though somebody tweaked his night-shirt from behind and touched him on the shoulder.

"Damnation!... Rosalia Karlovna!"

No answer. Vaxin hesitatingly opened the door and peeped into the room. The virtuous German was sweetly slumbering. The tiny flame of a night-light threw her solid buxom person into relief. Vaxin stepped into the room and sat down on a wickerwork trunk near the door. He felt better in the presence of a living creature, even though that creature was asleep.

"Let the German idiot sleep," he thought, "I'll sit here, and when it gets light I'll go back... It's daylight early now."

Vaxin curled up on the trunk and put his arm under his head to await the coming of dawn.

"What a thing it is to have nerves!" he reflected. "An educated, intelligent man!... Hang it all!... It's a perfect disgrace!"

As he listened to the gentle, even breathing of Rosalia Karlovna, he soon recovered himself completely.

At six o'clock, Vaxin's wife returned from the all-night service, and not finding her husband in their bedroom, went to the governess to ask her for some change for the cabman.

On entering the German's room, a strange sight met her eyes.

On the bed lay stretched Rosalia Karlovna fast asleep, and a couple of yards from her was her husband curled up on the trunk sleeping the sleep of the just and snoring loudly.

What she said to her husband, and how he looked when he woke, I leave to others to describe. It is beyond my powers.

THE DOCTOR

IT was still in the drawing-room, so still that a house-fly that had flown in from outside could be distinctly heard brushing against the ceiling. Olga Ivanovna, the lady of the villa, was standing by the window, looking out at the flower-beds and thinking. Dr. Tsvyetkov, who was her doctor as well as an old friend, and had been sent for to treat her son Misha, was sitting in an easy chair and swinging his hat, which he held in both hands, and he too was thinking. Except them, there was not a soul in the drawing-room or in the adjoining rooms. The sun had set, and the shades of evening began settling in the corners under the furniture and on the cornices.

The silence was broken by Olga Ivanovna.

"No misfortune more terrible can be imagined," she said, without turning from the window. "You know that life has no value for me whatever apart from the boy."

"Yes, I know that," said the doctor.

"No value whatever," said Olga Ivanovna, and her voice quivered. "He is everything to me. He is my joy, my happiness, my wealth. And if, as you say, I cease to be a mother, if he... dies, there will be nothing left of me but a shadow. I cannot survive it."

Wringing her hands, Olga Ivanovna walked from one window to the other and went on:

"When he was born, I wanted to send him away to the Foundling Hospital, you remember that, but, my God, how can that time be compared with now? Then I was vulgar, stupid, feather-headed, but now I am a mother, do you understand? I am a mother, and that's all I care to know. Between the present and the past there is an impassable gulf."

Silence followed again. The doctor shifted his seat from the chair to the sofa and impatiently playing with his hat, kept his eyes fixed upon Olga Ivanovna. From his face it could be seen that he wanted to speak, and was waiting for a fitting moment.

"You are silent, but still I do not give up hope," said the lady, turning round. "Why are you silent?"

"I should be as glad of any hope as you, Olga, but there is none,"

Tsvyetkov answered, "we must look the hideous truth in the face.

The boy has a tumour on the brain, and we must try to prepare

ourselves for his death, for such cases never recover."

"Nikolay, are you certain you are not mistaken?"

"Such questions lead to nothing. I am ready to answer as many as you like, but it will make it no better for us."

Olga Ivanovna pressed her face into the window curtains, and began weeping bitterly. The doctor got up and walked several times up and down the drawing-room, then went to the weeping woman, and lightly touched her arm. Judging from his uncertain movements, from the expression of his gloomy face, which looked dark in the dusk of the evening, he wanted to say something.

"Listen, Olga," he began. "Spare me a minute's attention; there is something I must ask you. You can't attend to me now, though. I'll come later, afterwards..." He sat down again, and sank into thought. The bitter, imploring weeping, like the weeping of a little girl, continued. Without waiting for it to end, Tsvyetkov heaved a sigh and walked out of the drawing-room. He went into the nursery to Misha. The boy was lying on his back as before, staring at one point as though he were listening. The doctor sat down on his bed and felt his pulse.

"Misha, does your head ache?" he asked.

Misha answered, not at once: "Yes. I keep dreaming."

"What do you dream?"

"All sorts of things..."

The doctor, who did not know how to talk with weeping women or with children, stroked his burning head, and muttered:

"Never mind, poor boy, never mind... One can't go through life without illness... Misha, who am I-do you know me?"

Misha did not answer.

"Does your head ache very badly?"

"Ve-ery. I keep dreaming."

After examining him and putting a few questions to the maid who was looking after the sick child, the doctor went slowly back to the drawing-room. There it was by now dark, and Olga Ivanovna, standing by the window, looked like a silhouette.

"Shall I light up?" asked Tsvyetkov.

No answer followed. The house-fly was still brushing against the ceiling. Not a sound floated in from outside as though the whole world, like the doctor, were thinking, and could not bring itself to speak. Olga Ivanovna was

not weeping now, but as before, staring at the flower-bed in profound silence. When Tsvyetkov went up to her, and through the twilight glanced at her pale face, exhausted with grief, her expression was such as he had seen before during her attacks of acute, stupefying, sick headache.

"Nikolay Trofimitch!" she addressed him, "and what do you think about a consultation?"

"Very good; I'll arrange it to-morrow."

From the doctor's tone it could be easily seen that he put little faith in the benefit of a consultation. Olga Ivanovna would have asked him something else, but her sobs prevented her. Again she pressed her face into the window curtain. At that moment, the strains of a band playing at the club floated in distinctly. They could hear not only the wind instruments, but even the violins and the flutes.

"If he is in pain, why is he silent?" asked Olga Ivanovna. "All day long, not a sound, he never complains, and never cries. I know God will take the poor boy from us because we have not known how to prize him. Such a treasure!"

The band finished the march, and a minute later began playing a lively waltz for the opening of the ball.

"Good God, can nothing really be done?" moaned Olga Ivanovna. "Nikolay, you are a doctor and ought to know what to do! You must understand that I can't bear the loss of him! I can't survive it."

The doctor, who did not know how to talk to weeping women, heaved a sigh, and paced slowly about the drawing-room. There followed a succession of oppressive pauses interspersed with weeping and the questions which lead to nothing. The band had already played a quadrille, a polka, and another quadrille. It got quite dark. In the adjoining room, the maid lighted the lamp; and all the while the doctor kept his hat in his hands, and seemed trying to say something. Several times Olga Ivanovna went off to her son, sat by him for half an hour, and came back again into the drawing-room; she was continually breaking into tears and lamentations. The time dragged agonisingly, and it seemed as though the evening had no end.

At midnight, when the band had played the cotillion and ceased altogether, the doctor got ready to go.

"I will come again to-morrow," he said, pressing the mother's cold hand. "You go to bed."

After putting on his greatcoat in the passage and picking up his walking-

stick, he stopped, thought a minute, and went back into the drawing-room.

"I'll come to-morrow, Olga," he repeated in a quivering voice. "Do you hear?"

She did not answer, and it seemed as though grief had robbed her of all power of speech. In his greatcoat and with his stick still in his hand, the doctor sat down beside her, and began in a soft, tender half-whisper, which was utterly out of keeping with his heavy, dignified figure:

"Olga! For the sake of your sorrow which I share... Now, when falsehood is criminal, I beseech you to tell me the truth. You have always declared that the boy is my son. Is that the truth?"

Olga Ivanovna was silent.

"You have been the one attachment in my life," the doctor went on, "and you cannot imagine how deeply my feeling is wounded by falsehood... Come, I entreat you, Olga, for once in your life, tell me the truth... At these moments one cannot lie. Tell me that Misha is not my son. I am waiting."

"He is."

Olga Ivanovna's face could not be seen, but in her voice the doctor could hear hesitation. He sighed.

"Even at such moments you can bring yourself to tell a lie," he said in his ordinary voice. "There is nothing sacred to you! Do listen, do understand me... You have been the one only attachment in my life. Yes, you were depraved, vulgar, but I have loved no one else but you in my life. That trivial love, now that I am growing old, is the one solitary bright spot in my memories. Why do you darken it with deception? What is it for?"

"I don't understand you."

"Oh my God!" cried Tsvyetkov. "You are lying, you understand very well!" he cried more loudly, and he began pacing about the drawing-room, angrily waving his stick. "Or have you forgotten? Then I will remind you! A father's rights to the boy are equally shared with me by Petrov and Kurovsky the lawyer, who still make you an allowance for their son's education, just as I do! Yes, indeed! I know all that quite well! I forgive your lying in the past, what does it matter? But now when you have grown older, at this moment when the boy is dying, your lying stifles me! How sorry I am that I cannot speak, how sorry I am!"

The doctor unbuttoned his overcoat, and still pacing about, said:

"Wretched woman! Even such moments have no effect on her! Even now she lies as freely as nine years ago in the Hermitage Restaurant! She is afraid

if she tells me the truth I shall leave off giving her money, she thinks that if she did not lie I should not love the boy! You are lying! It's contemptible!"

The doctor rapped the floor with his stick, and cried:

"It's loathsome. Warped, corrupted creature! I must despise you, and I ought to be ashamed of my feeling. Yes! Your lying has stuck in my throat these nine years, I have endured it, but now it's too much-too much."

From the dark corner where Olga Ivanovna was sitting there came the sound of weeping. The doctor ceased speaking and cleared his throat. A silence followed. The doctor slowly buttoned up his over-coat, and began looking for his hat which he had dropped as he walked about.

"I lost my temper," he muttered, bending down to the floor. "I quite lost sight of the fact that you cannot attend to me now... God knows what I have said... Don't take any notice of it, Olga."

He found his hat and went towards the dark corner.

"I have wounded you," he said in a soft, tender half-whisper, "but once more I entreat you, tell me the truth; there should not be lying between us... I blurted it out, and now you know that Petrov and Kurovsky are no secret to me. So now it is easy for you to tell me the truth."

Olga Ivanovna thought a moment, and with perceptible hesitation, said:

"Nikolay, I am not lying-Misha is your child."

"My God," moaned the doctor, "then I will tell you something more: I have kept your letter to Petrov in which you call him Misha's father! Olga, I know the truth, but I want to hear it from you! Do you hear?"

Olga Ivanovna made no reply, but went on weeping. After waiting for an answer the doctor shrugged his shoulders and went out.

"I will come to-morrow," he called from the passage.

All the way home, as he sat in his carriage, he was shrugging his shoulders and muttering:

"What a pity that I don't know how to speak! I haven't the gift of persuading and convincing. It's evident she does not understand me since she lies! It's evident! How can I make her see? How?"

ABOUT LOVE

AT lunch next day there were very nice pies, crayfish, and mutton cutlets; and while we were eating, Nikanor, the cook, came up to ask what the visitors would like for dinner. He was a man of medium height, with a puffy face and little eyes; he was close-shaven, and it looked as though his moustaches had not been shaved, but had been pulled out by the roots. Alehin told us that the beautiful Pelagea was in love with this cook. As he drank and was of a violent character, she did not want to marry him, but was willing to live with him without. He was very devout, and his religious convictions would not allow him to "live in sin"; he insisted on her marrying him, and would consent to nothing else, and when he was drunk he used to abuse her and even beat her. Whenever he got drunk she used to hide upstairs and sob, and on such occasions Alehin and the servants stayed in the house to be ready to defend her in case of necessity.

We began talking about love.

"How love is born," said Alehin, "why Pelagea does not love somebody more like herself in her spiritual and external qualities, and why she fell in love with Nikanor, that ugly snout-we all call him 'The Snout'-how far questions of personal happiness are of consequence in love-all that is known; one can take what view one likes of it. So far only one incontestable truth has been uttered about love: 'This is a great mystery.' Everything else that has been written or said about love is not a conclusion, but only a statement of questions which have remained unanswered. The explanation which would seem to fit one case does not apply in a dozen others, and the very best thing, to my mind, would be to explain every case individually without attempting to generalize. We ought, as the doctors say, to individualize each case."

"Perfectly true," Burkin assented.

"We Russians of the educated class have a partiality for these questions that remain unanswered. Love is usually poeticized, decorated with roses, nightingales; we Russians decorate our loves with these momentous questions, and select the most uninteresting of them, too. In Moscow, when I was a student, I had a friend who shared my life, a charming lady, and every time I took her in my arms she was thinking what I would allow her a month for housekeeping and what was the price of beef a pound. In the same way, when we are in love we are never tired of asking ourselves questions:

whether it is honourable or dishonourable, sensible or stupid, what this love is leading up to, and so on. Whether it is a good thing or not I don't know, but that it is in the way, unsatisfactory, and irritating, I do know."

It looked as though he wanted to tell some story. People who lead a solitary existence always have something in their hearts which they are eager to talk about. In town bachelors visit the baths and the restaurants on purpose to talk, and sometimes tell the most interesting things to bath attendants and waiters; in the country, as a rule, they unbosom themselves to their guests. Now from the window we could see a grey sky, trees drenched in the rain; in such weather we could go nowhere, and there was nothing for us to do but to tell stories and to listen.

"I have lived at Sofino and been farming for a long time," Alehin began, "ever since I left the University. I am an idle gentleman by education, a studious person by disposition; but there was a big debt owing on the estate when I came here, and as my father was in debt partly because he had spent so much on my education, I resolved not to go away, but to work till I paid off the debt. I made up my mind to this and set to work, not, I must confess, without some repugnance. The land here does not yield much, and if one is not to farm at a loss one must employ serf labour or hired labourers, which is almost the same thing, or put it on a peasant footing—that is, work the fields oneself and with one's family. There is no middle path. But in those days I did not go into such subtleties. I did not leave a clod of earth unturned; I gathered together all the peasants, men and women, from the neighbouring villages; the work went on at a tremendous pace. I myself ploughed and sowed and reaped, and was bored doing it, and frowned with disgust, like a village cat driven by hunger to eat cucumbers in the kitchen-garden. My body ached, and I slept as I walked. At first it seemed to me that I could easily reconcile this life of toil with my cultured habits; to do so, I thought, all that is necessary is to maintain a certain external order in life. I established myself upstairs here in the best rooms, and ordered them to bring me there coffee and liquor after lunch and dinner, and when I went to bed I read every night the *Yyesnik Evropi*. But one day our priest, Father Ivan, came and drank up all my liquor at one sitting; and the *Yyesnik Evropi* went to the priest's daughters; as in the summer, especially at the haymaking, I did not succeed in getting to my bed at all, and slept in the sledge in the barn, or somewhere in the forester's lodge, what chance was there of reading? Little by little I moved downstairs, began dining in the servants' kitchen, and of my former

luxury nothing is left but the servants who were in my father's service, and whom it would be painful to turn away.

"In the first years I was elected here an honorary justice of the peace. I used to have to go to the town and take part in the sessions of the congress and of the circuit court, and this was a pleasant change for me. When you live here for two or three months without a break, especially in the winter, you begin at last to pine for a black coat. And in the circuit court there were frock-coats, and uniforms, and dress-coats, too, all lawyers, men who have received a general education; I had some one to talk to. After sleeping in the sledge and dining in the kitchen, to sit in an arm-chair in clean linen, in thin boots, with a chain on one's waistcoat, is such luxury!

"I received a warm welcome in the town. I made friends eagerly. And of all my acquaintanceships the most intimate and, to tell the truth, the most agreeable to me was my acquaintance with Luganovitch, the vice-president of the circuit court. You both know him: a most charming personality. It all happened just after a celebrated case of incendiarism; the preliminary investigation lasted two days; we were exhausted. Luganovitch looked at me and said:

"'Look here, come round to dinner with me.'

"This was unexpected, as I knew Luganovitch very little, only officially, and I had never been to his house. I only just went to my hotel room to change and went off to dinner. And here it was my lot to meet Anna Alexyevna, Luganovitch's wife. At that time she was still very young, not more than twenty-two, and her first baby had been born just six months before. It is all a thing of the past; and now I should find it difficult to define what there was so exceptional in her, what it was in her attracted me so much; at the time, at dinner, it was all perfectly clear to me. I saw a lovely young, good, intelligent, fascinating woman, such as I had never met before; and I felt her at once some one close and already familiar, as though that face, those cordial, intelligent eyes, I had seen somewhere in my childhood, in the album which lay on my mother's chest of drawers.

"Four Jews were charged with being incendiaries, were regarded as a gang of robbers, and, to my mind, quite groundlessly. At dinner I was very much excited, I was uncomfortable, and I don't know what I said, but Anna Alexyevna kept shaking her head and saying to her husband:

"'Dmitry, how is this?'

"Luganovitch is a good-natured man, one of those simple-hearted people

who firmly maintain the opinion that once a man is charged before a court he is guilty, and to express doubt of the correctness of a sentence cannot be done except in legal form on paper, and not at dinner and in private conversation.

“‘You and I did not set fire to the place,’ he said softly, ‘and you see we are not condemned, and not in prison.’

“And both husband and wife tried to make me eat and drink as much as possible. From some trifling details, from the way they made the coffee together, for instance, and from the way they understood each other at half a word, I could gather that they lived in harmony and comfort, and that they were glad of a visitor. After dinner they played a duet on the piano; then it got dark, and I went home. That was at the beginning of spring.

“After that I spent the whole summer at Sofino without a break, and I had no time to think of the town, either, but the memory of the graceful fair-haired woman remained in my mind all those days; I did not think of her, but it was as though her light shadow were lying on my heart.

“In the late autumn there was a theatrical performance for some charitable object in the town. I went into the governor’s box (I was invited to go there in the interval); I looked, and there was Anna Alexyevna sitting beside the governor’s wife; and again the same irresistible, thrilling impression of beauty and sweet, caressing eyes, and again the same feeling of nearness. We sat side by side, then went to the foyer.

“‘You’ve grown thinner,’ she said; ‘have you been ill?’

“‘Yes, I’ve had rheumatism in my shoulder, and in rainy weather I can’t sleep.’

“‘You look dispirited. In the spring, when you came to dinner, you were younger, more confident. You were full of eagerness, and talked a great deal then; you were very interesting, and I really must confess I was a little carried away by you. For some reason you often came back to my memory during the summer, and when I was getting ready for the theatre today I thought I should see you.’

“And she laughed.

“‘But you look dispirited today,’ she repeated; ‘it makes you seem older.’

“The next day I lunched at the Luganovitchs’. After lunch they drove out to their summer villa, in order to make arrangements there for the winter, and I went with them. I returned with them to the town, and at midnight drank tea with them in quiet domestic surroundings, while the fire glowed, and the young mother kept going to see if her baby girl was asleep. And after that,

every time I went to town I never failed to visit the Luganovitchs. They grew used to me, and I grew used to them. As a rule I went in unannounced, as though I were one of the family.

“‘Who is there?’ I would hear from a faraway room, in the drawling voice that seemed to me so lovely.

“‘It is Pavel Konstantinovitch,’ answered the maid or the nurse.

“Anna Alexyevna would come out to me with an anxious face, and would ask every time:

“‘Why is it so long since you have been? Has anything happened?’

“Her eyes, the elegant refined hand she gave me, her indoor dress, the way she did her hair, her voice, her step, always produced the same impression on me of something new and extraordinary in my life, and very important. We talked together for hours, were silent, thinking each our own thoughts, or she played for hours to me on the piano. If there were no one at home I stayed and waited, talked to the nurse, played with the child, or lay on the sofa in the study and read; and when Anna Alexyevna came back I met her in the hall, took all her parcels from her, and for some reason I carried those parcels every time with as much love, with as much solemnity, as a boy.

“There is a proverb that if a peasant woman has no troubles she will buy a pig. The Luganovitchs had no troubles, so they made friends with me. If I did not come to the town I must be ill or something must have happened to me, and both of them were extremely anxious. They were worried that I, an educated man with a knowledge of languages, should, instead of devoting myself to science or literary work, live in the country, rush round like a squirrel in a rage, work hard with never a penny to show for it. They fancied that I was unhappy, and that I only talked, laughed, and ate to conceal my sufferings, and even at cheerful moments when I felt happy I was aware of their searching eyes fixed upon me. They were particularly touching when I really was depressed, when I was being worried by some creditor or had not money enough to pay interest on the proper day. The two of them, husband and wife, would whisper together at the window; then he would come to me and say with a grave face:

“‘If you really are in need of money at the moment, Pavel Konstantinovitch, my wife and I beg you not to hesitate to borrow from us.’

“And he would blush to his ears with emotion. And it would happen that, after whispering in the same way at the window, he would come up to me,

with red ears, and say:

“‘My wife and I earnestly beg you to accept this present.’

“And he would give me studs, a cigar-case, or a lamp, and I would send them game, butter, and flowers from the country. They both, by the way, had considerable means of their own. In early days I often borrowed money, and was not very particular about it-borrowed wherever I could-but nothing in the world would have induced me to borrow from the Luganovitchs. But why talk of it?

“I was unhappy. At home, in the fields, in the barn, I thought of her; I tried to understand the mystery of a beautiful, intelligent young woman’s marrying some one so uninteresting, almost an old man (her husband was over forty), and having children by him; to understand the mystery of this uninteresting, good, simple-hearted man, who argued with such wearisome good sense, at balls and evening parties kept near the more solid people, looking listless and superfluous, with a submissive, uninterested expression, as though he had been brought there for sale, who yet believed in his right to be happy, to have children by her; and I kept trying to understand why she had met him first and not me, and why such a terrible mistake in our lives need have happened.

“And when I went to the town I saw every time from her eyes that she was expecting me, and she would confess to me herself that she had had a peculiar feeling all that day and had guessed that I should come. We talked a long time, and were silent, yet we did not confess our love to each other, but timidly and jealously concealed it. We were afraid of everything that might reveal our secret to ourselves. I loved her tenderly, deeply, but I reflected and kept asking myself what our love could lead to if we had not the strength to fight against it. It seemed to be incredible that my gentle, sad love could all at once coarsely break up the even tenor of the life of her husband, her children, and all the household in which I was so loved and trusted. Would it be honourable? She would go away with me, but where? Where could I take her? It would have been a different matter if I had had a beautiful, interesting life-if, for instance, I had been struggling for the emancipation of my country, or had been a celebrated man of science, an artist or a painter; but as it was it would mean taking her from one everyday humdrum life to another as humdrum or perhaps more so. And how long would our happiness last? What would happen to her in case I was ill, in case I died, or if we simply grew cold to one another?

“And she apparently reasoned in the same way. She thought of her husband, her children, and of her mother, who loved the husband like a son. If she abandoned herself to her feelings she would have to lie, or else to tell the truth, and in her position either would have been equally terrible and inconvenient. And she was tormented by the question whether her love would bring me happiness-would she not complicate my life, which, as it was, was hard enough and full of all sorts of trouble? She fancied she was not young enough for me, that she was not industrious nor energetic enough to begin a new life, and she often talked to her husband of the importance of my marrying a girl of intelligence and merit who would be a capable housewife and a help to me-and she would immediately add that it would be difficult to find such a girl in the whole town.

“Meanwhile the years were passing. Anna Alexyevna already had two children. When I arrived at the Luganovitchs’ the servants smiled cordially, the children shouted that Uncle Pavel Konstantinovitch had come, and hung on my neck; every one was overjoyed. They did not understand what was passing in my soul, and thought that I, too, was happy. Every one looked on me as a noble being. And grown-ups and children alike felt that a noble being was walking about their rooms, and that gave a peculiar charm to their manner towards me, as though in my presence their life, too, was purer and more beautiful. Anna Alexyevna and I used to go to the theatre together, always walking there; we used to sit side by side in the stalls, our shoulders touching. I would take the opera-glass from her hands without a word, and feel at that minute that she was near me, that she was mine, that we could not live without each other; but by some strange misunderstanding, when we came out of the theatre we always said good-bye and parted as though we were strangers. Goodness knows what people were saying about us in the town already, but there was not a word of truth in it all!

“In the latter years Anna Alexyevna took to going away for frequent visits to her mother or to her sister; she began to suffer from low spirits, she began to recognize that her life was spoilt and unsatisfied, and at times she did not care to see her husband nor her children. She was already being treated for neurasthenia.

“We were silent and still silent, and in the presence of outsiders she displayed a strange irritation in regard to me; whatever I talked about, she disagreed with me, and if I had an argument she sided with my opponent. If I dropped anything, she would say coldly:

“‘I congratulate you.’

“If I forgot to take the opera-glass when we were going to the theatre, she would say afterwards:

“‘I knew you would forget it.’

“Luckily or unluckily, there is nothing in our lives that does not end sooner or later. The time of parting came, as Luganovitch was appointed president in one of the western provinces. They had to sell their furniture, their horses, their summer villa. When they drove out to the villa, and afterwards looked back as they were going away, to look for the last time at the garden, at the green roof, every one was sad, and I realized that I had to say goodbye not only to the villa. It was arranged that at the end of August we should see Anna Alexyevna off to the Crimea, where the doctors were sending her, and that a little later Luganovitch and the children would set off for the western province.

“We were a great crowd to see Anna Alexyevna off. When she had said good-bye to her husband and her children and there was only a minute left before the third bell, I ran into her compartment to put a basket, which she had almost forgotten, on the rack, and I had to say good-bye. When our eyes met in the compartment our spiritual fortitude deserted us both; I took her in my arms, she pressed her face to my breast, and tears flowed from her eyes. Kissing her face, her shoulders, her hands wet with tears-oh, how unhappy we were! – I confessed my love for her, and with a burning pain in my heart I realized how unnecessary, how petty, and how deceptive all that had hindered us from loving was. I understood that when you love you must either, in your reasonings about that love, start from what is highest, from what is more important than happiness or unhappiness, sin or virtue in their accepted meaning, or you must not reason at all.

“I kissed her for the last time, pressed her hand, and parted for ever. The train had already started. I went into the next compartment-it was empty-and until I reached the next station I sat there crying. Then I walked home to Sofino...”

While Alehin was telling his story, the rain left off and the sun came out. Burkin and Ivan Ivanovitch went out on the balcony, from which there was a beautiful view over the garden and the mill-pond, which was shining now in the sunshine like a mirror. They admired it, and at the same time they were sorry that this man with the kind, clever eyes, who had told them this story with such genuine feeling, should be rushing round and round this huge estate

like a squirrel on a wheel instead of devoting himself to science or something else which would have made his life more pleasant; and they thought what a sorrowful face Anna Alexyevna must have had when he said good-bye to her in the railway-carriage and kissed her face and shoulders. Both of them had met her in the town, and Burkin knew her and thought her beautiful.

THE LOTTERY TICKET

IVAN DMITRITCH, a middle-class man who lived with his family on an income of twelve hundred a year and was very well satisfied with his lot, sat down on the sofa after supper and began reading the newspaper.

"I forgot to look at the newspaper today," his wife said to him as she cleared the table. "Look and see whether the list of drawings is there."

"Yes, it is," said Ivan Dmitritch; "but hasn't your ticket lapsed?"

"No; I took the interest on Tuesday."

"What is the number?"

"Series 9,499, number 26."

"All right... we will look... 9,499 and 26."

Ivan Dmitritch had no faith in lottery luck, and would not, as a rule, have consented to look at the lists of winning numbers, but now, as he had nothing else to do and as the newspaper was before his eyes, he passed his finger downwards along the column of numbers. And immediately, as though in mockery of his scepticism, no further than the second line from the top, his eye was caught by the figure 9,499! Unable to believe his eyes, he hurriedly dropped the paper on his knees without looking to see the number of the ticket, and, just as though some one had given him a douche of cold water, he felt an agreeable chill in the pit of the stomach; tingling and terrible and sweet!

"Masha, 9,499 is there!" he said in a hollow voice.

His wife looked at his astonished and panic-stricken face, and realized that he was not joking.

"9,499?" she asked, turning pale and dropping the folded tablecloth on the table.

"Yes, yes... it really is there!"

"And the number of the ticket?"

"Oh, yes! There's the number of the ticket too. But stay... wait! No, I say! Anyway, the number of our series is there! Anyway, you understand..."

Looking at his wife, Ivan Dmitritch gave a broad, senseless smile, like a baby when a bright object is shown it. His wife smiled too; it was as pleasant to her as to him that he only mentioned the series, and did not try to find out the number of the winning ticket. To torment and tantalize oneself with hopes of possible fortune is so sweet, so thrilling!

“It is our series,” said Ivan Dmitritch, after a long silence. “So there is a probability that we have won. It’s only a probability, but there it is!”

“Well, now look!”

“Wait a little. We have plenty of time to be disappointed. It’s on the second line from the top, so the prize is seventy-five thousand. That’s not money, but power, capital! And in a minute I shall look at the list, and there-26! Eh? I say, what if we really have won?”

The husband and wife began laughing and staring at one another in silence. The possibility of winning bewildered them; they could not have said, could not have dreamed, what they both needed that seventy-five thousand for, what they would buy, where they would go. They thought only of the figures 9,499 and 75,000 and pictured them in their imagination, while somehow they could not think of the happiness itself which was so possible.

Ivan Dmitritch, holding the paper in his hand, walked several times from corner to corner, and only when he had recovered from the first impression began dreaming a little.

“And if we have won,” he said-“why, it will be a new life, it will be a transformation! The ticket is yours, but if it were mine I should, first of all, of course, spend twenty-five thousand on real property in the shape of an estate; ten thousand on immediate expenses, new furnishing... travelling... paying debts, and so on... The other forty thousand I would put in the bank and get interest on it.”

“Yes, an estate, that would be nice,” said his wife, sitting down and dropping her hands in her lap.

“Somewhere in the Tula or Oryol provinces... In the first place we shouldn’t need a summer villa, and besides, it would always bring in an income.”

And pictures came crowding on his imagination, each more gracious and poetical than the last. And in all these pictures he saw himself well-fed, serene, healthy, felt warm, even hot! Here, after eating a summer soup, cold as ice, he lay on his back on the burning sand close to a stream or in the garden under a lime-tree... It is hot... His little boy and girl are crawling about near him, digging in the sand or catching ladybirds in the grass. He dozes sweetly, thinking of nothing, and feeling all over that he need not go to the office today, tomorrow, or the day after. Or, tired of lying still, he goes to the hayfield, or to the forest for mushrooms, or watches the peasants catching fish with a net. When the sun sets he takes a towel and soap and saunters to

the bathing-shed, where he undresses at his leisure, slowly rubs his bare chest with his hands, and goes into the water. And in the water, near the opaque soapy circles, little fish flit to and fro and green water-weeds nod their heads. After bathing there is tea with cream and milk rolls... In the evening a walk or *vint* with the neighbours.

“Yes, it would be nice to buy an estate,” said his wife, also dreaming, and from her face it was evident that she was enchanted by her thoughts.

Ivan Dmitritch pictured to himself autumn with its rains, its cold evenings, and its St. Martin’s summer. At that season he would have to take longer walks about the garden and beside the river, so as to get thoroughly chilled, and then drink a big glass of vodka and eat a salted mushroom or a soused cucumber, and then-drink another... The children would come running from the kitchen-garden, bringing a carrot and a radish smelling of fresh earth... And then, he would lie stretched full length on the sofa, and in leisurely fashion turn over the pages of some illustrated magazine, or, covering his face with it and unbuttoning his waistcoat, give himself up to slumber.

The St. Martin’s summer is followed by cloudy, gloomy weather. It rains day and night, the bare trees weep, the wind is damp and cold. The dogs, the horses, the fowls-all are wet, depressed, downcast. There is nowhere to walk; one can’t go out for days together; one has to pace up and down the room, looking despondently at the grey window. It is dreary!

Ivan Dmitritch stopped and looked at his wife.

“I should go abroad, you know, Masha,” he said.

And he began thinking how nice it would be in late autumn to go abroad somewhere to the South of France... to Italy... to India!

“I should certainly go abroad too,” his wife said. “But look at the number of the ticket!”

“Wait, wait!...”

He walked about the room and went on thinking. It occurred to him: what if his wife really did go abroad? It is pleasant to travel alone, or in the society of light, careless women who live in the present, and not such as think and talk all the journey about nothing but their children, sigh, and tremble with dismay over every farthing. Ivan Dmitritch imagined his wife in the train with a multitude of parcels, baskets, and bags; she would be sighing over something, complaining that the train made her head ache, that she had spent so much money... At the stations he would continually be having to run for

boiling water, bread and butter... She wouldn't have dinner because of its being too dear...

"She would begrudge me every farthing," he thought, with a glance at his wife. "The lottery ticket is hers, not mine! Besides, what is the use of her going abroad? What does she want there? She would shut herself up in the hotel, and not let me out of her sight... I know!"

And for the first time in his life his mind dwelt on the fact that his wife had grown elderly and plain, and that she was saturated through and through with the smell of cooking, while he was still young, fresh, and healthy, and might well have got married again.

"Of course, all that is silly nonsense," he thought; "but... why should she go abroad? What would she make of it? And yet she would go, of course... I can fancy... In reality it is all one to her, whether it is Naples or Klin. She would only be in my way. I should be dependent upon her. I can fancy how, like a regular woman, she will lock the money up as soon as she gets it... She will hide it from me... She will look after her relations and grudge me every farthing."

Ivan Dmitritch thought of her relations. All those wretched brothers and sisters and aunts and uncles would come crawling about as soon as they heard of the winning ticket, would begin whining like beggars, and fawning upon them with oily, hypocritical smiles. Wretched, detestable people! If they were given anything, they would ask for more; while if they were refused, they would swear at them, slander them, and wish them every kind of misfortune.

Ivan Dmitritch remembered his own relations, and their faces, at which he had looked impartially in the past, struck him now as repulsive and hateful.

"They are such reptiles!" he thought.

And his wife's face, too, struck him as repulsive and hateful. Anger surged up in his heart against her, and he thought malignantly:

"She knows nothing about money, and so she is stingy. If she won it she would give me a hundred roubles, and put the rest away under lock and key."

And he looked at his wife, not with a smile now, but with hatred. She glanced at him too, and also with hatred and anger. She had her own daydreams, her own plans, her own reflections; she understood perfectly well what her husband's dreams were. She knew who would be the first to try and grab her winnings.

"It's very nice making daydreams at other people's expense!" is what her eyes expressed. "No, don't you dare!"

Her husband understood her look; hatred began stirring again in his breast, and in order to annoy his wife he glanced quickly, to spite her at the fourth page on the newspaper and read out triumphantly:

“Series 9,499, number 46! Not 26!”

Hatred and hope both disappeared at once, and it began immediately to seem to Ivan Dmitritch and his wife that their rooms were dark and small and low-pitched, that the supper they had been eating was not doing them good, but lying heavy on their stomachs, that the evenings were long and wearisome...

“What the devil’s the meaning of it?” said Ivan Dmitritch, beginning to be ill-humoured. “Wherever one steps there are bits of paper under one’s feet, crumbs, husks. The rooms are never swept! One is simply forced to go out. Damnation take my soul entirely! I shall go and hang myself on the first aspen-tree!”

LEONID ANDREYEV

LAZARUS

I

When Lazarus rose from the grave, after three days and nights in the mysterious thralldom of death, and returned alive to his home, it was a long time before any one noticed the evil peculiarities in him that were later to make his very name terrible. His friends and relatives were jubilant that he had come back to life. They surrounded him with tenderness, they were lavish of their eager attentions, spending the greatest care upon his food and drink and the new garments they made for him. They clad him gorgeously in the glowing colours of hope and laughter, and when, arrayed like a bridegroom, he sat at table with them again, ate again, and drank again, they wept fondly and summoned the neighbours to look upon the man miraculously raised from the dead.

The neighbours came and were moved with joy. Strangers arrived from distant cities and villages to worship the miracle. They burst into stormy exclamations, and buzzed around the house of Mary and Martha, like so many bees.

That which was new in Lazarus' face and gestures they explained naturally, as the traces of his severe illness and the shock he had passed through. It was evident that the disintegration of the body had been halted by a miraculous power, but that the restoration had not been complete; that death had left upon his face and body the effect of an artist's unfinished sketch seen through a thin glass. On his temples, under his eyes, and in the hollow of his cheek lay a thick, earthy blue. His fingers were blue, too, and under his nails, which had grown long in the grave, the blue had turned livid. Here and there on his lips and body, the skin, blistered in the grave, had burst open and left reddish glistening cracks, as if covered with a thin, glassy slime. And he had grown exceedingly stout. His body was horribly bloated and suggested the fetid, damp smell of putrefaction. But the cadaverous, heavy odour that clung to his burial garments and, as it seemed, to his very body, soon wore off, and after some time the blue of his hands and face softened, and the reddish cracks of his skin smoothed out, though they never disappeared completely. Such was the aspect of Lazarus in his second life. It looked natural only to those who had seen him buried.

Not merely Lazarus' face, but his very character, it seemed, had changed; though it astonished no one and did not attract the attention it deserved.

Before his death Lazarus had been cheerful and careless, a lover of laughter and harmless jest. It was because of his good humour, pleasant and equable, his freedom from meanness and gloom, that he had been so beloved by the Master. Now he was grave and silent; neither he himself jested nor did he laugh at the jests of others; and the words he spoke occasionally were simple, ordinary and necessary words-words as much devoid of sense and depth as are the sounds with which an animal expresses pain and pleasure, thirst and hunger. Such words a man may speak all his life and no one would ever know the sorrows and joys that dwelt within him.

Thus it was that Lazarus sat at the festive table among his friends and relatives-his face the face of a corpse over which, for three days, death had reigned in darkness, his garments gorgeous and festive, glittering with gold, bloody-red and purple; his mien heavy and silent. He was horribly changed and strange, but as yet undiscovered. In high waves, now mild, now stormy, the festivities went on around him. Warm glances of love caressed his face, still cold with the touch of the grave; and a friend's warm hand patted his bluish, heavy hand. And the music played joyous tunes mingled of the sounds of the tympanum, the pipe, the zither and the dulcimer. It was as if bees were humming, locusts buzzing and birds singing over the happy home of Mary and Martha.

II

Some one recklessly lifted the veil. By one breath of an uttered word he destroyed the serene charm, and uncovered the truth in its ugly nakedness. No thought was clearly defined in his mind, when his lips smilingly asked: "Why do you not tell us, Lazarus, what was There?" And all became silent, struck with the question. Only now it seemed to have occurred to them that for three days Lazarus had been dead; and they looked with curiosity, awaiting an answer. But Lazarus remained silent.

"You will not tell us?" wondered the inquirer. "Is it so terrible There?"

Again his thought lagged behind his words. Had it preceded them, he would not have asked the question, for, at the very moment he uttered it, his heart sank with a dread fear. All grew restless; they awaited the words of Lazarus anxiously. But he was silent, cold and severe, and his eyes were cast down. And now, as if for the first time, they perceived the horrible bluishness of his face and the loathsome corpulence of his body. On the table, as if forgotten by Lazarus, lay his livid blue hand, and all eyes were riveted upon it, as though expecting the desired answer from that hand. The musicians still played; then silence fell upon them, too, and the gay sounds died down, as scattered coals are extinguished by water. The pipe became mute, and the ringing tympanum and the murmuring dulcimer; and as though a chord were broken, as though song itself were dying, the zither echoed a trembling broken sound. Then all was quiet.

"You will not?" repeated the inquirer, unable to restrain his babbling tongue. Silence reigned, and the livid blue hand lay motionless. It moved slightly, and the company sighed with relief and raised their eyes. Lazarus, risen from the dead, was looking straight at them, embracing all with one glance, heavy and terrible.

This was on the third day after Lazarus had arisen from the grave. Since then many had felt that his gaze was the gaze of destruction, but neither those who had been forever crushed by it, nor those who in the prime of life (mysterious even as death) had found the will to resist his glance, could ever explain the terror that lay immovable in the depths of his black pupils. He looked quiet and simple. One felt that he had no intention to hide anything, but also no intention to tell anything. His look was cold, as of one who is entirely indifferent to all that is alive. And many careless people who pressed

around him, and did not notice him, later learned with wonder and fear the name of this stout, quiet man who brushed against them with his sumptuous, gaudy garments. The sun did not stop shining when he looked, neither did the fountain cease playing, and the Eastern sky remained cloudless and blue as always; but the man who fell under his inscrutable gaze could no longer feel the sun, nor hear the fountain, nor recognise his native sky. Sometimes he would cry bitterly, sometimes tear his hair in despair and madly call for help; but generally it happened that the men thus stricken by the gaze of Lazarus began to fade away listlessly and quietly and pass into a slow death lasting many long years. They died in the presence of everybody, colourless, haggard and gloomy, like trees withering on rocky ground. Those who screamed in madness sometimes came back to life; but the others, never.

“So you will not tell us, Lazarus, what you saw There?” the inquirer repeated for the third time. But now his voice was dull, and a dead, grey weariness looked stupidly from out his eyes. The faces of all present were also covered by the same dead grey weariness like a mist. The guests stared at one another stupidly, not knowing why they had come together or why they sat around this rich table. They stopped talking, and vaguely felt it was time to leave; but they could not overcome the lassitude that spread through their muscles. So they continued to sit there, each one isolated, like little dim lights scattered in the darkness of night.

The musicians were paid to play, and they again took up the instruments, and again played gay or mournful airs. But it was music made to order, always the same tunes, and the guests listened wonderingly. Why was this music necessary, they thought, why was it necessary and what good did it do for people to pull at strings and blow their cheeks into thin pipes, and produce varied and strange-sounding noises?

“How badly they play!” said some one.

The musicians were insulted and left. Then the guests departed one by one, for it was nearing night. And when the quiet darkness enveloped them, and it became easier to breathe, the image of Lazarus suddenly arose before each one in stern splendour. There he stood, with the blue face of a corpse and the raiment of a bridegroom, sumptuous and resplendent, in his eyes that cold stare in the depths of which lurked *The Horrible!* They stood still as if turned into stone. The darkness surrounded them, and in the midst of this darkness flamed up the horrible apparition, the supernatural vision, of the one who for three days had lain under the measureless power of death. Three days

he had been dead. Thrice had the sun risen and set-and he had lain dead. The children had played, the water had murmured as it streamed over the rocks, the hot dust had clouded the highway-and he had been dead. And now he was among men again-touched them-looked at them-*looked at them!* And through the black rings of his pupils, as through dark glasses, the unfathomable *There* gazed upon humanity.

III

No one took care of Lazarus, and no friends or kindred remained with him. Only the great desert, enfolding the Holy City, came close to the threshold of his abode. It entered his home, and lay down on his couch like a spouse, and put out all the fires. No one cared for Lazarus. One after the other went away, even his sisters, Mary and Martha. For a long while Martha did not want to leave him, for she knew not who would nurse him or take care of him; and she cried and prayed. But one night, when the wind was roaming about the desert, and the rustling cypress trees were bending over the roof, she dressed herself quietly, and quietly went away. Lazarus probably heard how the door was slammed-it had not shut properly and the wind kept knocking it continually against the post-but he did not rise, did not go out, did not try to find out the reason. And the whole night until the morning the cypress trees hissed over his head, and the door swung to and fro, allowing the cold, greedily prowling desert to enter his dwelling. Everybody shunned him as though he were a leper. They wanted to put a bell on his neck to avoid meeting him. But some one, turning pale, remarked it would be terrible if at night, under the windows, one should happen to hear Lazarus' bell, and all grew pale and assented.

Since he did nothing for himself, he would probably have starved had not his neighbours, in trepidation, saved some food for him. Children brought it to him. They did not fear him, neither did they laugh at him in the innocent cruelty in which children often laugh at unfortunates. They were indifferent to him, and Lazarus showed the same indifference to them. He showed no desire to thank them for their services; he did not try to pat the dark hands and look into the simple shining little eyes. Abandoned to the ravages of time and the desert, his house was falling to ruins, and his hungry, bleating goats had long been scattered among his neighbours. His wedding garments had grown old. He wore them without changing them, as he had donned them on that happy day when the musicians played. He did not see the difference between old and new, between torn and whole. The brilliant colours were burnt and faded; the vicious dogs of the city and the sharp thorns of the desert had rent the fine clothes to shreds.

During the day, when the sun beat down mercilessly upon all living things, and even the scorpions hid under the stones, convulsed with a mad

desire to sting, he sat motionless in the burning rays, lifting high his blue face and shaggy wild beard.

While yet the people were unafraid to speak to him, same one had asked him: "Poor Lazarus! Do you find it pleasant to sit so, and look at the sun?" And he answered: "Yes, it is pleasant."

The thought suggested itself to people that the cold of the three days in the grave had been so intense, its darkness so deep, that there was not in all the earth enough heat or light to warm Lazarus and lighten the gloom of his eyes; and inquirers turned away with a sigh.

And when the setting sun, flat and purple-red, descended to earth, Lazarus went into the desert and walked straight toward it, as though intending to reach it. Always he walked directly toward the sun, and those who tried to follow him and find out what he did at night in the desert had indelibly imprinted upon their mind's vision the black silhouette of a tall, stout man against the red background of an immense disk. The horrors of the night drove them away, and so they never found out what Lazarus did in the desert; but the image of the black form against the red was burned forever into their brains. Like an animal with a cinder in its eye which furiously rubs its muzzle against its paws, they foolishly rubbed their eyes; but the impression left by Lazarus was ineffaceable, forgotten only in death.

There were people living far away who never saw Lazarus and only heard of him. With an audacious curiosity which is stronger than fear and feeds on fear, with a secret sneer in their hearts, some of them came to him one day as he basked in the sun, and entered into conversation with him. At that time his appearance had changed for the better and was not so frightful. At first the visitors snapped their fingers and thought disapprovingly of the foolish inhabitants of the Holy City. But when the short talk came to an end and they went home, their expression was such that the inhabitants of the Holy City at once knew their errand and said: "Here go some more madmen at whom Lazarus has looked." The speakers raised their hands in silent pity.

Other visitors came, among them brave warriors in clinking armour, who knew not fear, and happy youths who made merry with laughter and song. Busy merchants, jingling their coins, ran in for awhile, and proud attendants at the Temple placed their staffs at Lazarus' door. But no one returned the same as he came. A frightful shadow fell upon their souls, and gave a new appearance to the old familiar world.

Those who felt any desire to speak, after they had been stricken by the

gaze of Lazarus, described the change that had come over them somewhat like this:

All objects seen by the eye and palpable to the hand became empty, light and transparent, as though they were light shadows in the darkness; and this darkness enveloped the whole universe. It was dispelled neither by the sun, nor by the moon, nor by the stars, but embraced the earth like a mother, and clothed it in a boundless black veil.

Into all bodies it penetrated, even into iron and stone; and the particles of the body lost their unity and became lonely. Even to the heart of the particles it penetrated, and the particles of the particles became lonely.

The vast emptiness which surrounds the universe, was not filled with things seen, with sun or moon or stars; it stretched boundless, penetrating everywhere, disuniting everything, body from body, particle from particle.

In emptiness the trees spread their roots, themselves empty; in emptiness rose phantom temples, palaces and houses-all empty; and in the emptiness moved restless Man, himself empty and light, like a shadow.

There was no more a sense of time; the beginning of all things and their end merged into one. In the very moment when a building was being erected and one could hear the builders striking with their hammers, one seemed already to see its ruins, and then emptiness where the ruins were.

A man was just born, and funeral candles were already lighted at his head, and then were extinguished; and soon there was emptiness where before had been the man and the candles.

And surrounded by Darkness and Empty Waste, Man trembled hopelessly before the dread of the Infinite.

So spoke those who had a desire to speak. But much more could probably have been told by those who did not want to talk, and who died in silence.

IV

At that time there lived in Rome a celebrated sculptor by the name of Aurelius. Out of clay, marble and bronze he created forms of gods and men of such beauty that this beauty was proclaimed immortal. But he himself was not satisfied, and said there was a supreme beauty that he had never succeeded in expressing in marble or bronze. "I have not yet gathered the radiance of the moon," he said; "I have not yet caught the glare of the sun. There is no soul in my marble, there is no life in my beautiful bronze." And when by moonlight he would slowly wander along the roads, crossing the black shadows of the cypress-trees, his white tunic flashing in the moonlight, those he met used to laugh good-naturedly and say: "Is it moonlight that you are gathering, Aurelius? Why did you not bring some baskets along?"

And he, too, would laugh and point to his eyes and say: "Here are the baskets in which I gather the light of the moon and the radiance of the sun."

And that was the truth. In his eyes shone moon and sun. But he could not transmit the radiance to marble. Therein lay the greatest tragedy of his life. He was a descendant of an ancient race of patricians, had a good wife and children, and except in this one respect, lacked nothing.

When the dark rumour about Lazarus reached him, he consulted his wife and friends and decided to make the long voyage to Judea, in order that he might look upon the man miraculously raised from the dead. He felt lonely in those days and hoped on the way to renew his jaded energies. What they told him about Lazarus did not frighten him. He had meditated much upon death. He did not like it, nor did he like those who tried to harmonise it with life. On this side, beautiful life; on the other, mysterious death, he reasoned, and no better lot could befall a man than to live-to enjoy life and the beauty of living. And he already had conceived a desire to convince Lazarus of the truth of this view and to return his soul to life even as his body had been returned. This task did not appear impossible, for the reports about Lazarus, fearsome and strange as they were, did not tell the whole truth about him, but only carried a vague warning against something awful.

Lazarus was getting up from a stone to follow in the path of the setting sun, on the evening when the rich Roman, accompanied by an armed slave, approached him, and in a ringing voice called to him: "Lazarus!"

Lazarus saw a proud and beautiful face, made radiant by fame, and white

garments and precious jewels shining in the sunlight. The ruddy rays of the sun lent to the head and face a likeness to dimly shining bronze—that was what Lazarus saw. He sank back to his seat obediently, and wearily lowered his eyes.

“It is true you are not beautiful, my poor Lazarus,” said the Roman quietly, playing with his gold chain. “You are even frightful, my poor friend; and death was not lazy the day when you so carelessly fell into its arms. But you are as fat as a barrel, and ‘Fat people are not bad,’ as the great Cæsar said. I do not understand why people are so afraid of you. You will permit me to stay with you over night? It is already late, and I have no abode.”

Nobody had ever asked Lazarus to be allowed to pass the night with him.

“I have no bed,” said he.

“I am somewhat of a warrior and can sleep sitting,” replied the Roman. “We shall make a light.”

“I have no light.”

“Then we will converse in the darkness like two friends. I suppose you have some wine?”

“I have no wine.”

The Roman laughed.

“Now I understand why you are so gloomy and why you do not like your second life. No wine? Well, we shall do without. You know there are words that go to one’s head even as Falernian wine.”

With a motion of his head he dismissed the slave, and they were alone. And again the sculptor spoke, but it seemed as though the sinking sun had penetrated into his words. They faded, pale and empty, as if trembling on weak feet, as if slipping and falling, drunk with the wine of anguish and despair. And black chasms appeared between the two men-like remote hints of vast emptiness and vast darkness.

“Now I am your guest and you will not ill-treat me, Lazarus!” said the Roman. “Hospitality is binding even upon those who have been three days dead. Three days, I am told, you were in the grave. It must have been cold there... and it is from there that you have brought this bad habit of doing without light and wine. I like a light. It gets dark so quickly here. Your eyebrows and forehead have an interesting line: even as the ruins of castles covered with the ashes of an earthquake. But why in such strange, ugly clothes? I have seen the bridegrooms of your country, they wear clothes like that—such ridiculous clothes—such awful garments... Are you a bridegroom?”

Already the sun had disappeared. A gigantic black shadow was approaching fast from the west, as if prodigious bare feet were rustling over the sand. And the chill breezes stole up behind.

“In the darkness you seem even bigger, Lazarus, as though you had grown stouter in these few minutes. Do you feed on darkness, perchance?... And I would like a light... just a small light... just a small light. And I am cold. The nights here are so barbarously cold... If it were not so dark, I should say you were looking at me, Lazarus. Yes, it seems, you are looking. You are looking. *You are looking at me!*... I feel it-now you are smiling.”

The night had come, and a heavy blackness filled the air.

“How good it will be when the sun rises again to-morrow... You know I am a great sculptor... so my friends call me. I create, yes, they say I create, but for that daylight is necessary. I give life to cold marble. I melt the ringing bronze in the fire, in a bright, hot fire. Why did you touch me with your hand?”

“Come,” said Lazarus, “you are my guest.” And they went into the house. And the shadows of the long evening fell on the earth...

The slave at last grew tired waiting for his master, and when the sun stood high he came to the house. And he saw, directly under its burning rays, Lazarus and his master sitting close together. They looked straight up and were silent.

The slave wept and cried aloud: “Master, what ails you, Master!”

The same day Aurelius left for Rome. The whole way he was thoughtful and silent, attentively examining everything, the people, the ship, and the sea, as though endeavouring to recall something. On the sea a great storm overtook them, and all the while Aurelius remained on deck and gazed eagerly at the approaching and falling waves. When he reached home his family were shocked at the terrible change in his demeanour, but he calmed them with the words: “I have found it!”

In the dusty clothes which he had worn during the entire journey and had not changed, he began his work, and the marble ringingly responded to the resounding blows of the hammer. Long and eagerly he worked, admitting no one. At last, one morning, he announced that the work was ready, and gave instructions that all his friends, and the severe critics and judges of art, be called together. Then he donned gorgeous garments, shining with gold, glowing with the purple of the byssin.

“Here is what I have created,” he said thoughtfully.

His friends looked, and immediately the shadow of deep sorrow covered their faces. It was a thing monstrous, possessing none of the forms familiar to the eye, yet not devoid of a hint of some new unknown form. On a thin tortuous little branch, or rather an ugly likeness of one, lay crooked, strange, unsightly, shapeless heaps of something turned outside in, or something turned inside out-wild fragments which seemed to be feebly trying to get away from themselves. And, accidentally, under one of the wild projections, they noticed a wonderfully sculptured butterfly, with transparent wings, trembling as though with a weak longing to fly.

“Why that wonderful butterfly, Aurelius?” timidly asked some one.

“I do not know,” answered the sculptor.

The truth had to be told, and one of his friends, the one who loved Aurelius best, said: “This is ugly, my poor friend. It must be destroyed. Give me the hammer.” And with two blows he destroyed the monstrous mass, leaving only the wonderfully sculptured butterfly.

After that Aurelius created nothing. He looked with absolute indifference at marble and at bronze and at his own divine creations, in which dwelt immortal beauty. In the hope of breathing into him once again the old flame of inspiration, with the idea of awakening his dead soul, his friends led him to see the beautiful creations of others, but he remained indifferent and no smile warmed his closed lips. And only after they spoke to him much and long of beauty, he would reply wearily:

“But all this is-a lie.”

And in the daytime, when the sun was shining, he would go into his rich and beautifully laid-out garden, and finding a place where there was no shadow, would expose his bare head and his dull eyes to the glitter and burning heat of the sun. Red and white butterflies fluttered around; down into the marble cistern ran splashing water from the crooked mouth of a blissfully drunken Satyr; but he sat motionless, like a pale shadow of that other one who, in a far land, at the very gates of the stony desert, also sat motionless under the fiery sun.

V

And it came about finally that Lazarus was summoned to Rome by the great Augustus.

They dressed him in gorgeous garments as though it had been ordained that he was to remain a bridegroom to an unknown bride until the very day of his death. It was as if an old coffin, rotten and falling apart, were regilded over and over, and gay tassels were hung on it. And solemnly they conducted him in gala attire, as though in truth it were a bridal procession, the runners loudly sounding the trumpet that the way be made for the ambassadors of the Emperor. But the roads along which he passed were deserted. His entire native land cursed the execrable name of Lazarus, the man miraculously brought to life, and the people scattered at the mere report of his horrible approach. The trumpeters blew lonely blasts, and only the desert answered with a dying echo.

Then they carried him across the sea on the saddest and most gorgeous ship that was ever mirrored in the azure waves of the Mediterranean. There were many people aboard, but the ship was silent and still as a coffin, and the water seemed to moan as it parted before the short curved prow. Lazarus sat lonely, baring his head to the sun, and listening in silence to the splashing of the waters. Further away the seamen and the ambassadors gathered like a crowd of distressed shadows. If a thunderstorm had happened to burst upon them at that time or the wind had overwhelmed the red sails, the ship would probably have perished, for none of those who were on her had strength or desire enough to fight for life. With supreme effort some went to the side of the ship and eagerly gazed at the blue, transparent abyss. Perhaps they imagined they saw a naiad flashing a pink shoulder through the waves, or an insanely joyous and drunken centaur galloping by, splashing up the water with his hoofs. But the sea was deserted and mute, and so was the watery abyss.

Listlessly Lazarus set foot on the streets of the Eternal City, as though all its riches, all the majesty of its gigantic edifices, all the lustre and beauty and music of refined life, were simply the echo of the wind in the desert, or the misty images of hot running sand. Chariots whirled by; the crowd of strong, beautiful, haughty men passed on, builders of the Eternal City and proud partakers of its life; songs rang out; fountains laughed; pearly laughter of

women filled the air, while the drunkard philosophised and the sober ones smilingly listened; horseshoes rattled on the pavement. And surrounded on all sides by glad sounds, a fat, heavy man moved through the centre of the city like a cold spot of silence, sowing in his path grief, anger and vague, carking distress. Who dared to be sad in Rome? indignantly demanded frowning citizens; and in two days the swift-tongued Rome knew of Lazarus, the man miraculously raised from the grave, and timidly evaded him.

There were many brave men ready to try their strength, and at their senseless call Lazarus came obediently. The Emperor was so engrossed with state affairs that he delayed receiving the visitor, and for seven days Lazarus moved among the people.

A jovial drunkard met him with a smile on his red lips. "Drink, Lazarus, drink!" he cried, "Would not Augustus laugh to see you drink!" And naked, besotted women laughed, and decked the blue hands of Lazarus with rose-leaves. But the drunkard looked into the eyes of Lazarus-and his joy ended forever. Thereafter he was always drunk. He drank no more, but was drunk all the time, shadowed by fearful dreams, instead of the joyous reveries that wine gives. Fearful dreams became the food of his broken spirit. Fearful dreams held him day and night in the mists of monstrous fantasy, and death itself was no more fearful than the apparition of its fierce precursor.

Lazarus came to a youth and his lass who loved each other and were beautiful in their love. Proudly and strongly holding in his arms his beloved one, the youth said, with gentle pity: "Look at us, Lazarus, and rejoice with us. Is there anything stronger than love?"

And Lazarus looked at them. And their whole life they continued to love one another, but their love became mournful and gloomy, even as those cypress trees over the tombs that feed their roots on the putrescence of the grave, and strive in vain in the quiet evening hour to touch the sky with their pointed tops. Hurlled by fathomless life-forces into each other's arms, they mingled their kisses with tears, their joy with pain, and only succeeded in realising the more vividly a sense of their slavery to the silent Nothing. Forever united, forever parted, they flashed like sparks, and like sparks went out in boundless darkness.

Lazarus came to a proud sage, and the sage said to him: "I already know all the horrors that you may tell me, Lazarus. With what else can you terrify me?"

Only a few moments passed before the sage realised that the knowledge

of the horrible is not the horrible, and that the sight of death is not death. And he felt that in the eyes of the Infinite wisdom and folly are the same, for the Infinite knows them not. And the boundaries between knowledge and ignorance, between truth and falsehood, between top and bottom, faded and his shapeless thought was suspended in emptiness. Then he grasped his grey head in his hands and cried out insanely: "I cannot think! I cannot think!"

Thus it was that under the cool gaze of Lazarus, the man miraculously raised from the dead, all that serves to affirm life, its sense and its joys, perished. And people began to say it was dangerous to allow him to see the Emperor; that it were better to kill him and bury him secretly, and swear he had disappeared. Swords were sharpened and youths devoted to the welfare of the people announced their readiness to become assassins, when Augustus upset the cruel plans by demanding that Lazarus appear before him.

Even though Lazarus could not be kept away, it was felt that the heavy impression conveyed by his face might be somewhat softened. With that end in view expert painters, barbers and artists were secured who worked the whole night on Lazarus' head. His beard was trimmed and curled. The disagreeable and deadly bluishness of his hands and face was covered up with paint; his hands were whitened, his cheeks rouged. The disgusting wrinkles of suffering that ridged his old face were patched up and painted, and on the smooth surface, wrinkles of good-nature and laughter, and of pleasant, good-humoured cheeriness, were laid on artistically with fine brushes.

Lazarus submitted indifferently to all they did with him, and soon was transformed into a stout, nice-looking old man, for all the world a quiet and good-humoured grandfather of numerous grandchildren. He looked as though the smile with which he told funny stories had not left his lips, as though a quiet tenderness still lay hidden in the corner of his eyes. But the wedding-dress they did not dare to take off; and they could not change his eyes-the dark, terrible eyes from out of which stared the incomprehensible *There*.

VI

Lazarus was untouched by the magnificence of the imperial apartments. He remained stolidly indifferent, as though he saw no contrast between his ruined house at the edge of the desert and the solid, beautiful palace of stone. Under his feet the hard marble of the floor took on the semblance of the moving sands of the desert, and to his eyes the throngs of gaily dressed, haughty men were as unreal as the emptiness of the air. They looked not into his face as he passed by, fearing to come under the awful bane of his eyes; but when the sound of his heavy steps announced that he had passed, heads were lifted, and eyes examined with timid curiosity the figure of the corpulent, tall, slightly stooping old man, as he slowly passed into the heart of the imperial palace. If death itself had appeared men would not have feared it so much; for hitherto death had been known to the dead only, and life to the living only, and between these two there had been no bridge. But this strange being knew death, and that knowledge of his was felt to be mysterious and cursed. "He will kill our great, divine Augustus," men cried with horror, and they hurled curses after him. Slowly and stolidly he passed them by, penetrating ever deeper into the palace.

Caesar knew already who Lazarus was, and was prepared to meet him. He was a courageous man; he felt his power was invincible, and in the fateful encounter with the man "wonderfully raised from the dead" he refused to lean on other men's weak help. Man to man, face to face, he met Lazarus.

"Do not fix your gaze on me, Lazarus," he commanded. "I have heard that your head is like the head of Medusa, and turns into stone all upon whom you look. But I should like to have a close look at you, and to talk to you before I turn into stone," he added in a spirit of playfulness that concealed his real misgivings.

Approaching him, he examined closely Lazarus' face and his strange festive clothes. Though his eyes were sharp and keen, he was deceived by the skilful counterfeit.

"Well, your appearance is not terrible, venerable sir. But all the worse for men, when the terrible takes on such a venerable and pleasant appearance. Now let us talk."

Augustus sat down, and as much by glance as by words began the discussion. "Why did you not salute me when you entered?"

Lazarus answered indifferently: "I did not know it was necessary."

"You are a Christian?"

"No."

Augustus nodded approvingly. "That is good. I do not like the Christians. They shake the tree of life, forbidding it to bear fruit, and they scatter to the wind its fragrant blossoms. But who are you?"

With some effort Lazarus answered: "I was dead."

"I heard about that. But who are you now?"

Lazarus' answer came slowly. Finally he said again, listlessly and indistinctly: "I was dead."

"Listen to me, stranger," said the Emperor sharply, giving expression to what had been in his mind before. "My empire is an empire of the living; my people are a people of the living and not of the dead. You are superfluous here. I do not know who you are, I do not know what you have seen There, but if you lie, I hate your lies, and if you tell the truth, I hate your truth. In my heart I feel the pulse of life; in my hands I feel power, and my proud thoughts, like eagles, fly through space. Behind my back, under the protection of my authority, under the shadow of the laws I have created, men live and labour and rejoice. Do you hear this divine harmony of life? Do you hear the war cry that men hurl into the face of the future, challenging it to strife?"

Augustus extended his arms reverently and solemnly cried out: "Blessed art thou, Great Divine Life!"

But Lazarus was silent, and the Emperor continued more severely: "You are not wanted here. Pitiful remnant, half devoured of death, you fill men with distress and aversion to life. Like a caterpillar on the fields, you are gnawing away at the full seed of joy, exuding the slime of despair and sorrow. Your truth is like a rusted sword in the hands of a night assassin, and I shall condemn you to death as an assassin. But first I want to look into your eyes. Mayhap only cowards fear them, and brave men are spurred on to struggle and victory. Then will you merit not death but a reward. Look at me, Lazarus."

At first it seemed to divine Augustus as if a friend were looking at him, so soft, so alluring, so gently fascinating was the gaze of Lazarus. It promised not horror but quiet rest, and the Infinite dwelt there as a fond mistress, a compassionate sister, a mother. And ever stronger grew its gentle embrace, until he felt, as it were, the breath of a mouth hungry for kisses... Then it

seemed as if iron bones protruded in a ravenous grip, and closed upon him in an iron band; and cold nails touched his heart, and slowly, slowly sank into it.

“It pains me,” said divine Augustus, growing pale; “but look, Lazarus, look!”

Ponderous gates, shutting off eternity, appeared to be slowly swinging open, and through the growing aperture poured in, coldly and calmly, the awful horror of the Infinite. Boundless Emptiness and Boundless Gloom entered like two shadows, extinguishing the sun, removing the ground from under the feet, and the cover from over the head. And the pain in his icy heart ceased.

“Look at me, look at me, Lazarus!” commanded Augustus, staggering...

Time ceased and the beginning of things came perilously near to the end. The throne of Augustus, so recently erected, fell to pieces, and emptiness took the place of the throne and of Augustus. Rome fell silently into ruins. A new city rose in its place, and it too was erased by emptiness. Like phantom giants, cities, kingdoms, and countries swiftly fell and disappeared into emptiness-swallowed up in the black maw of the Infinite...

“Cease,” commanded the Emperor. Already the accent of indifference was in his voice. His arms hung powerless, and his eagle eyes flashed and were dimmed again, struggling against overwhelming darkness.

“You have killed me, Lazarus,” he said drowsily.

These words of despair saved him. He thought of the people, whose shield he was destined to be, and a sharp, redeeming pang pierced his dull heart. He thought of them doomed to perish, and he was filled with anguish. First they seemed bright shadows in the gloom of the Infinite.-How terrible! Then they appeared as fragile vessels with life-agitated blood, and hearts that knew both sorrow and great joy.-And he thought of them with tenderness.

And so thinking and feeling, inclining the scales now to the side of life, now to the side of death, he slowly returned to life, to find in its suffering and joy a refuge from the gloom, emptiness and fear of the Infinite.

“No, you did not kill me, Lazarus,” said he firmly. “But I will kill you. Go!”

Evening came and divine Augustus partook of food and drink with great joy. But there were moments when his raised arm would remain suspended in the air, and the light of his shining, eager eyes was dimmed. It seemed as if an icy wave of horror washed against his feet. He was vanquished but not killed, and coldly awaited his doom, like a black shadow. His nights were

haunted by horror, but the bright days still brought him the joys, as well as the sorrows, of life.

Next day, by order of the Emperor, they burned out Lazarus' eyes with hot irons and sent him home. Even Augustus dared not kill him.

Lazarus returned to the desert and the desert received him with the breath of the hissing wind and the ardour of the glowing sun. Again he sat on the stone with matted beard uplifted; and two black holes, where the eyes had once been, looked dull and horrible at the sky. In the distance the Holy City surged and roared restlessly, but near him all was deserted and still. No one approached the place where Lazarus, miraculously raised from the dead, passed his last days, for his neighbours had long since abandoned their homes. His cursed knowledge, driven by the hot irons from his eyes deep into the brain, lay there in ambush; as if from ambush it might spring out upon men with a thousand unseen eyes. No one dared to look at Lazarus.

And in the evening, when the sun, swollen crimson and growing larger, bent its way toward the west, blind Lazarus slowly groped after it. He stumbled against stones and fell; corpulent and feeble, he rose heavily and walked on; and against the red curtain of sunset his dark form and outstretched arms gave him the semblance of a cross.

It happened once that he went and never returned. Thus ended the second life of Lazarus, who for three days had been in the mysterious thralldom of death and then was miraculously raised from the dead.

THE LITTLE ANGEL

Translated by William Henry Lowe

I

At times Sashka wished to give up what is called living: to cease to wash every morning in cold water, on which thin sheets of ice floated about; to go no more to the grammar school, and there to have to listen to every one scolding him; no more to experience the pain in the small of his back and indeed over his whole body when his mother made him kneel in the corner all the evening. But, since he was only thirteen years of age, and did not know all the means by which people abandon life at will, he continued to go to the grammar school and to kneel in the corner, and it seemed to him as if life would never end. A year would go by, and another, and yet another, and still he would be going to school, and be made to kneel in the corner. And since Sashka possessed an indomitable and bold spirit, he could not supinely tolerate evil, and so found means to avenge himself on life. With this object in view he would thrash his companions, be rude to the Head, impertinent to the masters, and tell lies all day long to his teachers and to his mother-but to his father only he never lied. If in a fight he got his nose broken, he would purposely make the damage worse, and howl, without shedding a single tear, but so loudly that all who heard him were fain to stop their ears to keep out the disagreeable sound. When he had howled as long as thought advisable, he would suddenly cease, and, putting out his tongue, draw in his copy-book a caricature of himself howling at an usher who pressed his fingers to his ears, while the victor stood trembling with fear. The whole copy-book was filled with caricatures, the one which most frequently occurred being that of a short stout woman beating a boy as thin as a lucifer-match with a rolling pin. Below in a large scrawling hand would be written the legend: "Beg my pardon, puppy!" and the reply, "Won't! blow'd if I do!"

Before Christmas Sashka was expelled from school, and when his mother attempted to thrash him, he bit her finger. This action gave him his liberty. He left off washing in the morning, ran about all day bullying the other boys, and had but one fear, and that was hunger, for his mother entirely left off providing for him, so that he came to depend upon the pieces of bread and potatoes which his father secreted for him. On these conditions Sashka found existence tolerable.

One Friday (it was Christmas Eve) he had been playing with the other boys, until they had dispersed to their homes, followed by the squeak of the

rusty frozen wicket gate as it closed behind the last of them. It was already growing dark, and a grey snowy mist was travelling up from the country, along a dark alley; in a low black building, which stood fronting the end of the alley, a lamp was burning with a reddish, unblinking light. The frost had become more intense, and when Sashka reached the circle of light cast by the lamp, he saw that fine dry flakes of snow were floating slowly on the air. It was high time to be getting home.

“Where have you been knocking about all night, puppy?” exclaimed his mother doubling her fist, without, however, striking. Her sleeves were turned up, exposing her fat white arms, and on her forehead, almost devoid of eyebrows, stood beads of perspiration. As Sashka passed by her he recognized the familiar smell of vodka. His mother scratched her head with the short dirty nail of her thick fore-finger, and since it was no good scolding, she merely spat, and cried: “Statisticians! that’s what they are!”

Sashka shuffled contemptuously, and went behind the partition, from whence might be heard the heavy breathing of his father, Ivan Savvich, who was in a chronic state of shivering, and was now trying to warm himself by sitting on the heated bench of the stove with his hands under him, palms downwards.

“Sashka! the Svetchnikovs have invited you to the Christmas tree. The housemaid came,” he whispered.

“Get along with you!” said Sashka with incredulity.

“Fact! The old woman there has purposely not told you, but she has mended your jacket all the same.”

“Non-sense,” Sashka replied, still more surprised.

The Svetchnikovs were rich people, who had put him to the grammar school, and after his expulsion had forbidden him their house.

His father once more took his oath to the truth of his statement, and Sashka became meditative.

“Well then, move, shift a bit,” he said to his father, as he leapt upon the short bench, adding:

“I won’t go to those devils. I should prove jolly well too much for them, if I were to turn up. *Depraved boy*,” drawled Sashka in imitation of his patrons. “They are none too good themselves, the smug-faced prigs!”

“Oh! Sashka, Sashka,” his father complained, sitting hunched up with cold, “you’ll come to a bad end.”

“What about yourself, then?” was Sashka’s rude rejoinder. “Better shut

up. Afraid of the old woman. Ba! old muff!”

His father sat on in silence and shivered. A faint light found its way through a broad clink at the top, where the partition failed to meet the ceiling by a quarter of an inch, and lay in bright patches upon his high forehead, beneath which the deep cavities of his eyes showed black.

In times gone by Ivan Savvich had been used to drink heavily, and then his wife had feared and hated him. But when he had begun to develop unmistakable signs of consumption, and could drink no longer, she took to drink in her turn, and gradually accustomed herself to vodka. Then she avenged herself for all she had suffered at the hands of that tall narrow-chested man, who used incomprehensible words, had lost his place through disobedience and drunkenness, and who brought home with him just such long-haired, debauched and conceited fellows as himself.

In contradistinction to her husband, the more Feoktista Petrovna drank the healthier she became, and the heavier became her fists. Now she said what she pleased, brought men and women to the house just as she chose, and sang with them noisy songs, while he lay silent behind the partition huddled together with perpetual cold, and meditating on the injustice and sorrow of human life. To every one, with whom she talked, she complained that she had no such enemies in the world as her husband and son, they were stuck-up statisticians!

For the space of an hour his mother kept drumming into Sashka's ears:

“But I say you shall go,” punctuating each word with a heavy blow on the table, which made the tumblers, placed on it after washing, jump and rattle again.

“But I say I won't!” Sashka coolly replied, dragging down the corners of his mouth with the will to show his teeth—a habit which had earned for him at school the nickname of Wolfkin.

“I'll thrash you, won't I just!” cried his mother.

“All right! thrash away!”

But Feoktista Petrovna knew that she could no longer strike her son now that he had begun to retaliate by biting, and that if she drove him into the street he would go off larking, and sooner get frost-bitten than go to the Svetchnikovs, therefore she appealed to her husband's authority.

“Calls himself a father, and can't protect the mother from insult!”

“Really, Sashka, go. Why are you so obstinate?” he jerked out from the bench. “They will perhaps take you up again. They are kind people.” Sashka

only laughed in an insulting manner.

His father, long ago, before Sashka was born, had been tutor at the Svetchnikovs', and had ever since looked on them as the best people in the world. At that time he had held also an appointment in the statistical office of the *Zemstvo*, and had not yet taken to drink. Eventually he was compelled through his own fault to marry his landlady's daughter. From that time he severed his connection with the Svetchnikovs, and took to drink. Indeed, he let himself go to such an extent, that he was several times picked up drunk in the streets and taken to the police station. But the Svetchnikovs did not cease to assist him with money, and Feoktista Petrovna, although she hated them, together with books and everything connected with her husband's past, still valued their acquaintance, and was in the habit of boasting of it.

"Perhaps you might bring something for me too from the Christmas tree," continued his father. He was using craft to induce his son to go, and Sashka knew it, and despised his father for his weakness and want of straightforwardness; though he really did wish to bring back something for the poor sickly old man, who had for a long time been without even good tobacco.

"All right!" he blurted out; "give me my jacket. Have you put the buttons on? No fear! I know you too well!"

II

The children had not yet been admitted to the drawing-room, where the Christmas tree stood, but remained chattering in the nursery. Sashka, with lofty superciliousness, stood listening to their naive talk, and fingering in his breeches pocket the broken cigarettes which he had managed to abstract from his host's study. At this moment there came up to him the youngest of the Svetchnikovs, Kolya, and stood motionless before him, a look of surprise on his face, his toes turned in, and a finger stuck in the corner of his pouting mouth. Six months ago, at the instance of his relatives, he had given up this bad habit of putting his finger in his mouth, but he could not quite break himself of it. He had blonde locks cut in a fringe on his forehead and falling in ringlets on his shoulders, and blue, wondering eyes; in fact, he was just such a boy in appearance as Sashka particularly loved to bully.

"Are 'oo weally a naughty boy?" he inquired of Sashka. "Miss said 'oo was. I'm a dood boy."

"That you are!" replied Sashka, considering the other's short velvet trousers and great turndown collars.

"Would 'oo like to have a dun? There!" and he pointed at him a little pop-gun with a cork tied to it. The Wolfkin took the gun, pressed down the spring, and, aiming at the nose of the unsuspecting Kolya, pulled the trigger. The cork struck his nose, and rebounding, hung by the string. Kolya's blue eyes opened wider than ever, and filled with tears. Transferring his finger from his mouth to his reddening nose he blinked his long eyelashes and whispered:

"Bad-bad boy!"

A young lady of striking appearance, with her hair dressed in the simplest and the most becoming fashion, now entered the nursery. She was sister to the lady of the house, the very one indeed to whom Sashka's father had formerly given lessons.

"Here's the boy," said she, pointing out Sashka to the bald-headed man who accompanied her. "Bow, Sashka, you should not be so rude!"

But Sashka would bow neither to her, nor to her companion of the bald head. She little suspected how much he knew. But, as a fact, Sashka did know that his miserable father had loved her, and that she had married another; and, though this had taken place subsequent to his father's marriage,

Sashka could not bring himself to forgive what seemed to him like treachery.

“Takes after his father!” sighed Sofia Dmitrievna. “Could not you, Plutov Michailovich, do something for him? My husband says that a commercial school would suit him better than the grammar school. Sashka, would you like to go to a technical school?”

“No!” curtly replied Sashka, who had caught the offensive word “husband.”

“Do you want to be a shepherd, then?” asked the gentleman.

“Not likely!” said Sashka, in an offended tone.

“What then?”

Now Sashka did not know what he would like to be, but upon reflection replied: “Well, it’s all the same to me, even a shepherd, if you like.”

The bald-headed gentleman regarded the strange boy with a look of perplexity. When his eyes had travelled up from his patched boots to his face, Sashka put out his tongue and quickly drew it back again, so that Sofia Dmitrievna did not notice anything, but the old gentleman showed an amount of irascibility that she could not understand.

“I should not mind going to a commercial school,” bashfully suggested Sashka.

The lady was overjoyed at Sashka’s decision, and meditated with a sigh on the beneficial influence exercised by an old love.

“I don’t know whether there will be a vacancy,” dryly remarked the old man avoiding looking at Sashka, and smoothing down the ridge of hair which stuck up on the back of his head. “However, we shall see.”

Meanwhile the children were becoming noisy, and in a great state of excitement were waiting impatiently for the Christmas tree.

The excellent practice with the pop-gun made in the hands of a boy, who commanded respect both for his stature and for his reputation for naughtiness, found imitators, and many a little button of a nose was made red. The tiny maids, holding their sides, bent almost double with laughter, as their little cavaliers with manly contempt of fear and pain, but all the same wrinkling up their faces in suspense, received the impact of the cork.

At length the doors were opened, and a voice said: “Come in, children; gently, not so fast!” Opening their little eyes wide, and holding their breath in anticipation, the children filed into the brightly illumined drawing-room in orderly pairs, and quietly walked round the glittering tree. It cast a strong, shadowless light on their eager faces, with rounded eyes and mouths. For a

minute there reigned the silence of profound enchantment, which all at once broke out into a chorus of delighted exclamation. One of the little girls, unable to restrain her delight, kept dancing up and down in the same place, her little tress braided with blue ribbon beating meanwhile rhythmically against her shoulders. Sashka remained morose and gloomy-something evil was working in his little wounded breast. The tree blinded him with its red, shriekingly insolent glitter of countless candles. It was foreign, hostile to him, even as the crowd of smart, pretty children which surrounded it. He would have liked to give it a shove, and topple it over on their shining heads. It seemed as though some iron hand were gripping his heart, and wringing out of it every drop of blood. He crept behind the piano, and sat down there in a corner unconsciously crumpling to pieces in his pocket the last of the cigarettes, and thinking that though he had a father and mother and a home, it came to the same thing as if he had none, and nowhere to go to. He tried to recall to his imagination his little penknife, which he had acquired by a swap not long ago, and was very fond of; but his knife all at once seemed to him a very poor affair with its ground-down blade and only half of a yellow haft. To-morrow he would smash it up, and then he would have nothing left at all!

But suddenly Sashka's narrow eyes gleamed with astonishment, and his face in a moment resumed its ordinary expression of audacity and self-confidence. On the side of the tree turned towards him-which was the back of it, and less brightly illumined than the other side-he discovered something such as had never come within the circle of his existence, and without which all his surroundings appeared as empty as though peopled by persons without life. It was a little angel in wax carelessly hung in the thickest of the dark boughs, and looking as if it were floating in the air. His transparent dragon-fly wings trembled in the light, and he seemed altogether alive and ready to fly away. The rosy fingers of his exquisitely formed hands were stretched upwards, and from his head there floated just such locks as Kolya's. But there was something here that was wanting in Kolya's face, and in all other faces and things. The face of the little angel did not shine with joy, nor was it clouded by grief; but there lay on it the impress of another feeling, not to be explained in words, nor defined by thought, but to be attained only by the sympathy of a kindred feeling. Sashka was not conscious of the force of the mysterious influence which attracted him towards the little angel, but he felt that he had known him all his life, and had always loved him, loved him more than his penknife, more than his father, more than anything else. Filled with

doubt, alarm, and a delight which he could not comprehend, Sashka clasped his hands to his bosom and whispered:

“Dear-dear little angel!”

The more intently he looked the more fraught with significance the expression of the little angel’s face became. He was so infinitely far off, so unlike everything which surrounded him there. The other toys seemed to take a pride in hanging there pretty, and decked out, upon the glittering tree, but he was pensive, and fearing the intrusive light purposely hid himself in the dark greenery, so that none might see him. It would be a mad cruelty to touch his dainty little wings.

“Dear-dear!” whispered Sashka.

His head became feverish. He clasped his hands behind his back, and in full readiness to fight to the death to win the little angel, he walked to and fro with cautious, stealthy steps. He avoided looking at the little angel, lest he should direct the attention of others towards him, but he felt that he was still there, and had not flown away.

Now the hostess appeared in the doorway, a tall, stately lady with a bright aureole of grey hair dressed high upon her head. The children trooped round her with expressions of delight, and the little girl-the same that had danced about in her place-hung wearily on her hand, blinking heavily with sleepy eyes.

As Sashka approached her he seemed almost choking with emotion.

“Auntie-auntie!”[1] said he, trying to speak caressingly, but his voice sounded harsher than ever. “Auntie, dear!”

She did not hear him, so he tugged impatiently at her dress.

“What’s the matter with you? Why are you pulling my dress?” said the grey-haired lady in surprise. “It’s rude.”

“Auntie-auntie, do give me one thing from the tree; give me the little angel.”

“Impossible,” replied the lady in a tone of indifference. “We are going to keep the tree decorated till the New Year. But you are no longer a child; you should call me by name-Maria Dmitrievna.”

Sashka, feeling as if he were falling down a precipice, grasped the last means of saving himself.

“I am sorry I have been naughty. I’ll be more industrious for the future,” he blurted out. But this formula, which had always paid with his masters, made no impression upon the lady of the grey hair.

“A good thing, too, my friend,” she said, as unconcernedly as before.

“Give me the little angel,” demanded Sashka, gruffly.

“But it’s impossible. Can’t you understand that?”

But Sashka did not understand, and when the lady turned to go out of the room he followed her, his gaze fixed without conscious thought upon her black silk dress. In his surging brain there glimmered a recollection of how one of the boys in his class had asked the master to mark him 3,[2] and when the master refused he had knelt down before him, and putting his hands together as in prayer, had begun to cry. The master was angry, but gave him 3 all the same. At the time Sashka had immortalised this episode in a caricature, but now his only means left was to follow the boy’s example. Accordingly he plucked at the lady’s dress again, and when she turned round, dropped with a bang on to his knees, and folded his hands as described above. But he could not squeeze out a single tear!

“Are you out of your mind?” exclaimed the grey-haired lady, casting a searching look round the room; but luckily no one was present.

“What is the matter with you?”

Kneeling there with clasped hands, Sashka looked at her with dislike, and rudely repeated:

“Give me the little angel.”

His eyes, fixed intently on the lady to catch the first word she should utter, were anything but good to look at, and the hostess answered hurriedly:

“Well, then, I’ll give it to you. Ah! what a stupid you are! I will give you what you want, but why could you not wait till the New Year?”

“Stand up! And never,” she added in a didactic tone, “never kneel to any one: it is humiliating. Kneel before God alone.”

“Talk away!” thought Sashka, trying to get in front of her, and merely succeeding in treading on her dress.

When she had taken the toy from the tree, Sashka devoured her with his eyes, but stretched out his hands for it with a painful pucker of the nose. It seemed to him that the tall lady would break the little angel.

“Beautiful thing!” said the lady, who was sorry to part with such a dainty and presumably expensive toy. “Who can have hung it there? Well, what do you want with such a thing? Are you not too big to know what to do with it? Look, there are some picture-books. But this I promised to give to Kolya; he begged so earnestly for it.” But this was not the truth.

Sashka’s agony became unbearable. He clenched his teeth convulsively,

and seemed almost to grind them. The lady of the grey hair feared nothing so much as a scene, so she slowly held out the little angel to Sashka.

“There now, take it!” she said in a displeased tone; “what a persistent boy you are!”

Sashka’s hands as they seized the little angel seemed like tentacles, and were tense as steel springs, but withal so soft and careful that the little angel might have imagined himself to be flying in the air.

“A-h-h!” escaped in a long *diminuendo* sigh from Sashka’s breast, while in his eyes glistened two little tear-drops, which stood still there as though unused to the light. Slowly drawing the little angel to his bosom, he kept his shining eyes on the hostess, with a quiet, tender smile which died away in a feeling of unearthly bliss. It seemed, when the dainty wings of the little angel touched Sashka’s sunken breast, as if he experienced something so blissful, so bright, the like of which had never before been experienced in this sorrowful, sinful, suffering world.

“A-h-h!” sighed he once more as the little angel’s wings touched him. And at the shining of his face the absurdly decorated and insolently growing tree seemed to be extinguished, and the grey-haired, portly dame smiled with gladness, and the parchment-like face of the bald-headed gentleman twitched, and the children fell into a vivid silence as though touched by a breath of human happiness.

For one short moment all observed a mysterious likeness between the awkward boy who had outgrown his clothes, and the lineaments of the little angel, which had been spiritualised by the hand of an unknown artist.

But the next moment the picture was entirely changed. Crouching like a panther preparing to spring, Sashka surveyed the surrounding company, on the look-out for some one who should dare wrest his little angel from him.

“I’m going home,” he said in a dull voice, having in view a way of escape through the crowd, “home to Father.”

[1] This is, of course, only a child’s way of addressing an elder.-Tr.]

[2] In Russian schools 5 is the maximum mark.-TV.]

III

His mother was asleep worn out with a whole day's work and vodka-drinking. In the little room behind the partition there stood a small cooking-lamp burning on the table. Its feeble yellow light, with difficulty penetrating the sooty glass, threw a strange shadow over the faces of Sashka and his father.

"Is it not pretty?" asked Sashka in a whisper, holding the little angel at a distance from his father, so as not to allow him to touch it.

"Yes, there's something most remarkable about him," whispered the father, gazing thoughtfully at the toy. And his face expressed the same concentrated attention and delight, as did Sashka's.

"Look, he is going to fly."

"I see it too," replied Sashka in an ecstasy. "Think I'm blind? But look at his little wings! Ah! don't touch!"

The father withdrew his hand, and with troubled eyes studied the details of the little angel, while Sashka whispered with the air of a pedagogue:

"Father, what a bad habit you have of touching everything! You might break it."

There fell upon the wall the shadows of two grotesque, motionless heads bending towards one another, one big and shaggy, the other small and round.

Within the big head strange torturing thoughts, though at the same time full of delight, were seething. His eyes unblinkingly regarded the little angel, and under his steadfast gaze it seemed to grow larger and brighter, and its wings to tremble with a noiseless trepidation, and all the surroundings-the timber-built, soot-stained wall, the dirty table, Sashka-everything became fused into one level grey mass without light or shade. It seemed to the broken man that he heard a pitying voice from the world of wonders, wherein once he had dwelt, and whence he had been cast out forever. There they knew nothing of dirt, of weary quarrelling, of the blindly-cruel strife of egotism, there they knew nothing of the tortures of a man arrested in the streets with callous laughter, and beaten by the rough hand of the night-watchman. There everything is pure, joyful, bright. And all this purity found an asylum in the soul of her whom he loved more than life, and had lost-when he had kept his hold upon his own useless life. With the smell of wax, which emanated from the toy, was mingled a subtle aroma, and it seemed to the broken man that her

dear fingers touched the angel, those fingers which he would fain have caressed in one long kiss, till death should close his lips forever. This was why the little toy was so beautiful, this was why there was in it something specially attractive, which defied description. The little angel had descended from that heaven which her soul was to him, and had brought a ray of light into the damp room, steeped in sulphurous fumes, and to the dark soul of the man from whom had been taken all: love, and happiness, and life.

On a level with the eyes of the man, who had lived his life, sparkled the eyes of the boy, who was beginning his life, and embraced the little angel in their caress. For them present and future had disappeared: the ever-sorrowful, piteous father, the rough, unendurable mother, the black darkness of insults, of cruelty, of humiliations, and of spiteful grief. The thoughts of Sashka were formless, nebulous, but all the more deeply for that did they move his agitated soul. Everything that is good and bright in the world, all profound grief, and the hope of a soul that sighs for God-the little angel absorbed them all into himself, and that was why he glowed with such a soft divine radiance, that was why his little dragonfly wings trembled with a noiseless trepidation.

The father and son did not look at one another: their sick hearts grieved, wept, and rejoiced apart. But there was a something in their thoughts which fused their hearts in one, and annihilated that bottomless abyss which separates man from man and makes him so lonely, unhappy, and weak. The father with an unconscious motion put his arm around the neck of his son, and the son's head rested equally without conscious volition upon his father's consumptive chest.

"*She* it was who gave it to thee, was it not?" whispered the father, without taking his eyes off the little angel.

At another time Sashka would have replied with a rude negation, but now the only reply possible resounded of itself within his soul, and he calmly pronounced the pious fraud: "Who else? of course she did."

The father made no reply, and Sashka relapsed into silence.

Something grated in the adjoining room, then clicked, and then was silent for a moment, and then noisily and hurriedly the clock struck "One, two, three."

"Sashka, do you ever dream?" asked the father in a meditative tone.

"No! Oh, yes," he admitted, "once I had one, in which I fell down from the roof. We were climbing after the pigeons, and I fell down."

"But I dream always. Strange things are dreams. One sees the whole past,

one loves and suffers as though it were reality.”

Again he was silent, and Sashka felt his arm tremble as it lay upon his neck. The trembling and pressure of his father’s arm became stronger and stronger, and the sensitive silence of the night was all at once broken by the pitiful sobbing sound of suppressed weeping. Sashka sternly puckered his brow, and cautiously-so as not to disturb the heavy trembling arm-wiped away a tear from his eyes. So strange was it to see a big old man crying.

“Ah! Sashka, Sashka,” sobbed the father, “what is the meaning of everything?”

“Why, what’s the matter?” sternly whispered Sashka. “You’re crying just like a little boy.”

“Well, I won’t, then,” said the father with, a piteous smile of excuse. “What’s the good?”

Feoktista Petrovna turned on her bed. She sighed, cleared her throat, and mumbled incoherent sounds in a loud and strangely persistent manner.

It was time to go to bed. But before doing so the little angel must be disposed of for the night. He could not be left on the floor, so he was hung up by his string, which was fastened to the flue of the stove. There it stood out accurately delineated against the white Dutch-tiles. And so they could both see him, Sashka and his father.

Hurriedly throwing into a corner the various rags on which he was in the habit of sleeping, Sashka lay down on his back, in order as quickly as possible to look again at the little angel.

“Why don’t you undress?” asked his father as he shivered and wrapped himself up in his tattered blanket, and arranged his clothes, which he had thrown over his feet.

“What’s the good? I shall soon be up again.”

Sashka wished to add that he did not care to go to sleep at all, but he had no time to do so, since he fell to sleep as suddenly as though he had sunk to the bottom of a deep swift river.

His father presently fell asleep also. And gentle sleep and restfulness lay upon the weary face of the man who had lived his life, and upon the brave face of the little man who was just beginning his life.

But the little angel hanging by the hot stove began to melt. The lamp, which had been left burning at the entreaty of Sashka, filled the room with the smell of kerosene, and through its smoked glass threw a melancholy light upon a scene of gradual dissolution. The little angel seemed to stir. Over his

rosy fingers there rolled thick drops which fell upon the bench. To the smell of kerosene was added the stifling scent of melting wax. The little angel gave a tremble as though on the point of flight, and-fell with a soft thud upon the hot flags.

An inquisitive cockroach singed its wings as it ran round the formless lump of melted wax, climbed up the dragon-fly wings, and twitching its feelers went on its way.

Through the curtained window the grey-blue light of coming day crept in, and the frozen water-carrier was already making a noise in the courtyard with his iron scoop.

MAXIM GORKY

ONE AUTUMN NIGHT

Once in the autumn I happened to be in a very unpleasant and inconvenient position. In the town where I had just arrived and where I knew not a soul, I found myself without a farthing in my pocket and without a night's lodging.

Having sold during the first few days every part of my costume without which it was still possible to go about, I passed from the town into the quarter called "Yste," where were the steamship wharves-a quarter which during the navigation season fermented with boisterous, laborious life, but now was silent and deserted, for we were in the last days of October.

Dragging my feet along the moist sand, and obstinately scrutinising it with the desire to discover in it any sort of fragment of food, I wandered alone among the deserted buildings and warehouses, and thought how good it would be to get a full meal.

In our present state of culture hunger of the mind is more quickly satisfied than hunger of the body. You wander about the streets, you are surrounded by buildings not bad-looking from the outside and-you may safely say it-not so badly furnished inside, and the sight of them may excite within you stimulating ideas about architecture, hygiene, and many other wise and high-flying subjects. You may meet warmly and neatly dressed folks-all very polite, and turning away from you tactfully, not wishing offensively to notice the lamentable fact of your existence. Well, well, the mind of a hungry man is always better nourished and healthier than the mind of the well-fed man; and there you have a situation from which you may draw a very ingenious conclusion in favour of the ill fed.

The evening was approaching, the rain was falling, and the wind blew violently from the north. It whistled in the empty booths and shops, blew into the plastered window-panes of the taverns, and whipped into foam the wavelets of the river which splashed noisily on the sandy shore, casting high their white crests, racing one after another into the dim distance, and leaping impetuously over one another's shoulders. It seemed as if the river felt the proximity of winter, and was running at random away from the fetters of ice which the north wind might well have flung upon her that very night. The sky was heavy and dark; down from it swept incessantly scarcely visible drops of rain, and the melancholy elegy in nature all around me was emphasised by a

couple of battered and misshapen willow-trees and a boat, bottom upwards, that was fastened to their roots.

The overturned canoe with its battered keel and the miserable old trees rifled by the cold wind-everything around me was bankrupt, barren, and dead, and the sky flowed with undryable tears... Everything around was waste and gloomy... it seemed as if everything were dead, leaving me alone among the living, and for me also a cold death waited.

I was then eighteen years old-a good time!

I walked and walked along the cold wet sand, making my chattering teeth warble in honour of cold and hunger, when suddenly, as I was carefully searching for something to eat behind one of the empty crates, I perceived behind it, crouching on the ground, a figure in woman's clothes dank with the rain and clinging fast to her stooping shoulders. Standing over her, I watched to see what she was doing. It appeared that she was digging a trench in the sand with her hands-digging away under one of the crates.

"Why are you doing that?" I asked, crouching down on my heels quite close to her.

She gave a little scream and was quickly on her legs again. Now that she stood there staring at me, with her wide-open grey eyes full of terror, I perceived that it was a girl of my own age, with a very pleasant face embellished unfortunately by three large blue marks. This spoilt her, although these blue marks had been distributed with a remarkable sense of proportion, one at a time, and all were of equal size-two under the eyes, and one a little bigger on the forehead just over the bridge of the nose. This symmetry was evidently the work of an artist well inured to the business of spoiling the human physiognomy.

The girl looked at me, and the terror in her eyes gradually died out... She shook the sand from her hands, adjusted her cotton head-gear, cowered down, and said:

"I suppose you too want something to eat? Dig away then! My hands are tired. Over there"-she nodded her head in the direction of a booth-"there is bread for certain... and sausages too... That booth is still carrying on business."

I began to dig. She, after waiting a little and looking at me, sat down beside me and began to help me.

We worked in silence. I cannot say now whether I thought at that moment of the criminal code, of morality, of proprietorship, and all the other things

about which, in the opinion of many experienced persons, one ought to think every moment of one's life. Wishing to keep as close to the truth as possible, I must confess that apparently I was so deeply engaged in digging under the crate that I completely forgot about everything else except this one thing: What could be inside that crate?

The evening drew on. The grey, mouldy, cold fog grew thicker and thicker around us. The waves roared with a hollower sound than before, and the rain pattered down on the boards of that crate more loudly and more frequently. Somewhere or other the night-watchman began springing his rattle.

"Has it got a bottom or not?" softly inquired my assistant. I did not understand what she was talking about, and I kept silence.

"I say, has the crate got a bottom? If it has we shall try in vain to break into it. Here we are digging a trench, and we may, after all, come upon nothing but solid boards. How shall we take them off? Better smash the lock; it is a wretched lock."

Good ideas rarely visit the heads of women, but, as you see, they do visit them sometimes. I have always valued good ideas, and have always tried to utilise them as far as possible.

Having found the lock, I tugged at it and wrenched off the whole thing. My accomplice immediately stooped down and wriggled like a serpent into the gaping-open, four cornered cover of the crate whence she called to me approvingly, in a low tone:

"You're a brick!"

Nowadays a little crumb of praise from a woman is dearer to me than a whole dithyramb from a man, even though he be more eloquent than all the ancient and modern orators put together. Then, however, I was less amiably disposed than I am now, and, paying no attention to the compliment of my comrade, I asked her curtly and anxiously:

"Is there anything?"

In a monotonous tone she set about calculating our discoveries.

"A basketful of bottles-thick furs-a sunshade-an iron pail."

All this was uneatable. I felt that my hopes had vanished... But suddenly she exclaimed vivaciously:

"Aha! here it is!"

"What?"

"Bread... a loaf... it's only wet... take it!"

A loaf flew to my feet and after it herself, my valiant comrade. I had already bitten off a morsel, stuffed it in my mouth, and was chewing it...

"Come, give me some too!... And we mustn't stay here... Where shall we go?" she looked inquiringly about on all sides... It was dark, wet, and boisterous.

"Look! there's an upset canoe yonder... let us go there."

"Let us go then!" And off we set, demolishing our booty as we went, and filling our mouths with large portions of it... The rain grew more violent, the river roared; from somewhere or other resounded a prolonged mocking whistle-just as if Someone great who feared nobody was whistling down all earthly institutions and along with them this horrid autumnal wind and us its heroes. This whistling made my heart throb painfully, in spite of which I greedily went on eating, and in this respect the girl, walking on my left hand, kept even pace with me.

"What do they call you?" I asked her-why I know not.

"Natasha," she answered shortly, munching loudly.

I stared at her. My heart ached within me; and then I stared into the mist before me, and it seemed to me as if the inimical countenance of my Destiny was smiling at me enigmatically and coldly.

The rain scourged the timbers of the skiff incessantly, and its soft patter induced melancholy thoughts, and the wind whistled as it flew down into the boat's battered bottom through a rift, where some loose splinters of wood were rattling together-a disquieting and depressing sound. The waves of the river were splashing on the shore, and sounded so monotonous and hopeless, just as if they were telling something unbearably dull and heavy, which was boring them into utter disgust, something from which they wanted to run away and yet were obliged to talk about all the same. The sound of the rain blended with their splashing, and a long-drawn sigh seemed to be floating above the overturned skiff-the endless, labouring sigh of the earth, injured and exhausted by the eternal changes from the bright and warm summer to the cold misty and damp autumn. The wind blew continually over the desolate shore and the foaming river-blew and sang its melancholy songs...

Our position beneath the shelter of the skiff was utterly devoid of comfort; it was narrow and damp, tiny cold drops of rain dribbled through the damaged bottom; gusts of wind penetrated it. We sat in silence and shivered with cold. I remembered that I wanted to go to sleep. Natasha leaned her back against the hull of the boat and curled herself up into a tiny ball. Embracing

her knees with her hands, and resting her chin upon them, she stared doggedly at the river with wide-open eyes; on the pale patch of her face they seemed immense, because of the blue marks below them. She never moved, and this immobility and silence-I felt it-gradually produced within me a terror of my neighbour. I wanted to talk to her, but I knew not how to begin.

It was she herself who spoke.

“What a cursed thing life is!” she exclaimed plainly, abstractedly, and in a tone of deep conviction.

But this was no complaint. In these words there was too much of indifference for a complaint. This simple soul thought according to her understanding-thought and proceeded to form a certain conclusion which she expressed aloud, and which I could not confute for fear of contradicting myself. Therefore I was silent, and she, as if she had not noticed me, continued to sit there immovable.

“Even if we croaked... what then...?” Natasha began again, this time quietly and reflectively, and still there was not one note of complaint in her words. It was plain that this person, in the course of her reflections on life, was regarding her own case, and had arrived at the conviction that in order to preserve herself from the mockeries of life, she was not in a position to do anything else but simply “croak”-to use her own expression.

The clearness of this line of thought was inexpressibly sad and painful to me, and I felt that if I kept silence any longer I was really bound to weep... And it would have been shameful to have done this before a woman, especially as she was not weeping herself. I resolved to speak to her.

“Who was it that knocked you about?” I asked. For the moment I could not think of anything more sensible or more delicate.

“Pashka did it all,” she answered in a dull and level tone.

“And who is he?”

“My lover... He was a baker.”

“Did he beat you often?”

“Whenever he was drunk he beat me... Often!”

And suddenly, turning towards me, she began to talk about herself, Pashka, and their mutual relations. He was a baker with red moustaches and played very well on the banjo. He came to see her and greatly pleased her, for he was a merry chap and wore nice clean clothes. He had a vest which cost fifteen rubles and boots with dress tops. For these reasons she had fallen in love with him, and he became her “creditor.” And when he became her

creditor he made it his business to take away from her the money which her other friends gave to her for bonbons, and, getting drunk on this money, he would fall to beating her; but that would have been nothing if he hadn't also begun to "run after" other girls before her very eyes.

"Now, wasn't that an insult? I am not worse than the others. Of course that meant that he was laughing at me, the blackguard. The day before yesterday I asked leave of my mistress to go out for a bit, went to him, and there I found Dimka sitting beside him drunk. And he, too, was half seas over. I said, 'You scoundrel, you!' And he gave me a thorough hiding. He kicked me and dragged me by the hair. But that was nothing to what came after. He spoiled everything I had on-left me just as I am now! How could I appear before my mistress? He spoiled everything... my dress and my jacket too-it was quite a new one; I gave a fiver for it... and tore my kerchief from my head... Oh, Lord! What will become of me now?" she suddenly whined in a lamentable overstrained voice.

The wind howled, and became ever colder and more boisterous... Again my teeth began to dance up and down, and she, huddled up to avoid the cold, pressed as closely to me as she could, so that I could see the gleam of her eyes through the darkness.

"What wretches all you men are! I'd burn you all in an oven; I'd cut you in pieces. If any one of you was dying I'd spit in his mouth, and not pity him a bit. Mean skunks! You wheedle and wheedle, you wag your tails like cringing dogs, and we fools give ourselves up to you, and it's all up with us! Immediately you trample us underfoot... Miserable loafers"

She cursed us up and down, but there was no vigour, no malice, no hatred of these "miserable loafers" in her cursing that I could hear. The tone of her language by no means corresponded with its subject-matter, for it was calm enough, and the gamut of her voice was terribly poor.

Yet all this made a stronger impression on me than the most eloquent and convincing pessimistic books and speeches, of which I had read a good many and which I still read to this day. And this, you see, was because the agony of a dying person is much more natural and violent than the most minute and picturesque descriptions of death.

I felt really wretched-more from cold than from the words of my neighbour. I groaned softly and ground my teeth.

Almost at the same moment I felt two little arms about me-one of them touched my neck and the other lay upon my face-and at the same time an

anxious, gentle, friendly voice uttered the question:

“What ails you?”

I was ready to believe that some one else was asking me this and not Natasha, who had just declared that all men were scoundrels, and expressed a wish for their destruction. But she it was, and now she began speaking quickly, hurriedly.

“What ails you, eh? Are you cold? Are you frozen? Ah, what a one you are, sitting there so silent like a little owl! Why, you should have told me long ago that you were cold. Come... lie on the ground... stretch yourself out and I will lie... there! How’s that? Now put your arms round me?... tighter! How’s that? You shall be warm very soon now... And then we’ll lie back to back... The night will pass so quickly, see if it won’t. I say... have you too been drinking?... Turned out of your place, eh?... It doesn’t matter.”

And she comforted me... She encouraged me.

May I be thrice accursed! What a world of irony was in this single fact for me! Just imagine! Here was I, seriously occupied at this very time with the destiny of humanity, thinking of the re-organisation of the social system, of political revolutions, reading all sorts of devilishly-wise books whose abysmal profundity was certainly unfathomable by their very authors-at this very time, I say, I was trying with all my might to make of myself “a potent active social force.” It even seemed to me that I had partially accomplished my object; anyhow, at this time, in my ideas about myself, I had got so far as to recognise that I had an exclusive right to exist, that I had the necessary greatness to deserve to live my life, and that I was fully competent to play a great historical part therein. And a woman was now warming me with her body, a wretched, battered, hunted creature, who had no place and no value in life, and whom I had never thought of helping till she helped me herself, and whom I really would not have known how to help in any way even if the thought of it had occurred to me.

Ah! I was ready to think that all this was happening to me in a dream-in a disagreeable, an oppressive dream.

But, ugh! it was impossible for me to think that, for cold drops of rain were dripping down upon me, the woman was pressing close to me, her warm breath was fanning my face, and-despite a slight odor of vodka-it did me good. The wind howled and raged, the rain smote upon the skiff, the waves splashed, and both of us, embracing each other convulsively, nevertheless shivered with cold. All this was only too real, and I am certain that nobody

ever dreamed such an oppressive and horrid dream as that reality.

But Natasha was talking all the time of something or other, talking kindly and sympathetically, as only women can talk. Beneath the influence of her voice and kindly words a little fire began to burn up within me, and something inside my heart thawed in consequence.

Then tears poured from my eyes like a hailstorm, washing away from my heart much that was evil, much that was stupid, much sorrow and dirt which had fastened upon it before that night. Natasha comforted me.

“Come, come, that will do, little one! Don’t take on! That’ll do! God will give you another chance... you will right yourself and stand in your proper place again... and it will be all right...”

And she kept kissing me... many kisses did she give me... burning kisses... and all for nothing...

Those were the first kisses from a woman that had ever been bestowed upon me, and they were the best kisses too, for all the subsequent kisses cost me frightfully dear, and really gave me nothing at all in exchange.

“Come, don’t take on so, funny one! I’ll manage for you to-morrow if you cannot find a place.” Her quiet persuasive whispering sounded in my ears as if it came through a dream...

There we lay till dawn...

And when the dawn came, we crept from behind the skiff and went into the town... Then we took friendly leave of each other and never met again, although for half a year I searched in every hole and corner for that kind Natasha, with whom I spent the autumn night just described.

If she be already dead-and well for her if it were so-may she rest in peace! And if she be alive... still I say “Peace to her soul!” And may the consciousness of her fall never enter her soul... for that would be a superfluous and fruitless suffering if life is to be lived...

HER LOVER

An acquaintance of mine once told me the following story.

When I was a student at Moscow I happened to live alongside one of those ladies whose repute is questionable. She was a Pole, and they called her Teresa. She was a tallish, powerfully-built brunette, with black, bushy eyebrows and a large coarse face as if carved out by a hatchet-the bestial gleam of her dark eyes, her thick bass voice, her cabman-like gait and her immense muscular vigour, worthy of a fishwife, inspired me with horror. I lived on the top flight and her garret was opposite to mine. I never left my door open when I knew her to be at home. But this, after all, was a very rare occurrence. Sometimes I chanced to meet her on the staircase or in the yard, and she would smile upon me with a smile which seemed to me to be sly and cynical. Occasionally, I saw her drunk, with bleary eyes, tousled hair, and a particularly hideous grin. On such occasions she would speak to me.

“How d’ye do, Mr. Student!” and her stupid laugh would still further intensify my loathing of her. I should have liked to have changed my quarters in order to have avoided such encounters and greetings; but my little chamber was a nice one, and there was such a wide view from the window, and it was always so quiet in the street below-so I endured.

And one morning I was sprawling on my couch, trying to find some sort of excuse for not attending my class, when the door opened, and the bass voice of Teresa the loathsome resounded from my threshold:

“Good health to you, Mr. Student!”

“What do you want?” I said. I saw that her face was confused and supplicatory... It was a very unusual sort of face for her.

“Sir! I want to beg a favour of you. Will you grant it me?”

I lay there silent, and thought to myself:

“Gracious!... Courage, my boy!”

“I want to send a letter home, that’s what it is,” she said; her voice was beseeching, soft, timid.

“Deuce take you!” I thought; but up I jumped, sat down at my table, took a sheet of paper, and said:

“Come here, sit down, and dictate!”

She came, sat down very gingerly on a chair, and looked at me with a guilty look.

“Well, to whom do you want to write?”

“To Boleslav Kashput, at the town of Svieptziana, on the Warsaw Road...”

“Well, fire away!”

“My dear Boles... my darling... my faithful lover. May the Mother of God protect thee! Thou heart of gold, why hast thou not written for such a long time to thy sorrowing little dove, Teresa?”

I very nearly burst out laughing. “A sorrowing little dove!” more than five feet high, with fists a stone and more in weight, and as black a face as if the little dove had lived all its life in a chimney, and had never once washed itself! Restraining myself somehow, I asked:

“Who is this Boles?”

“Boles, Mr. Student,” she said, as if offended with me for blundering over the name, “he is Boles-my young man.”

“Young man!”

“Why are you so surprised, sir? Cannot I, a girl, have a young man?”

She? A girl? Well!

“Oh, why not?” I said. “All things are possible. And has he been your young man long?”

“Six years.”

“Oh, ho!” I thought. “Well, let us write your letter...”

And I tell you plainly that I would willingly have changed places with this Boles if his fair correspondent had been not Teresa but something less than she.

“I thank you most heartily, sir, for your kind services,” said Teresa to me, with a curtsy. “Perhaps *I* can show *you* some service, eh?”

“No, I most humbly thank you all the same.”

“Perhaps, sir, your shirts or your trousers may want a little mending?”

I felt that this mastodon in petticoats had made me grow quite red with shame, and I told her pretty sharply that I had no need whatever of her services.

She departed.

A week or two passed away. It was evening. I was sitting at my window whistling and thinking of some expedient for enabling me to get away from myself. I was bored; the weather was dirty. I didn’t want to go out, and out of sheer ennui I began a course of self-analysis and reflection. This also was dull enough work, but I didn’t care about doing anything else. Then the door

opened. Heaven be praised! Some one came in.

“Oh, Mr. Student, you have no pressing business, I hope?”

It was Teresa. Humph!

“No. What is it?”

“I was going to ask you, sir, to write me another letter.”

“Very well! To Boles, eh?”

“No, this time it is from him.”

“Wha-at?”

“Stupid that I am! It is not for me, Mr. Student, I beg your pardon. It is for a friend of mine, that is to say, not a friend but an acquaintance—a man acquaintance. He has a sweetheart just like me here, Teresa. That’s how it is. Will you, sir, write a letter to this Teresa?”

I looked at her—her face was troubled, her fingers were trembling. I was a bit fogged at first—and then I guessed how it was.

“Look here, my lady,” I said, “there are no Boleses or Teresas at all, and you’ve been telling me a pack of lies. Don’t you come sneaking about me any longer. I have no wish whatever to cultivate your acquaintance. Do you understand?”

And suddenly she grew strangely terrified and distraught; she began to shift from foot to foot without moving from the place, and spluttered comically, as if she wanted to say something and couldn’t. I waited to see what would come of all this, and I saw and felt that, apparently, I had made a great mistake in suspecting her of wishing to draw me from the path of righteousness. It was evidently something very different.

“Mr. Student!” she began, and suddenly, waving her hand, she turned abruptly towards the door and went out. I remained with a very unpleasant feeling in my mind. I listened. Her door was flung violently to—plainly the poor wench was very angry... I thought it over, and resolved to go to her, and, inviting her to come in here, write everything she wanted.

I entered her apartment. I looked round. She was sitting at the table, leaning on her elbows, with her head in her hands.

“Listen to me,” I said.

Now, whenever I come to this point in my story, I always feel horribly awkward and idiotic. Well, well!

“Listen to me,” I said.

She leaped from her seat, came towards me with flashing eyes, and laying her hands on my shoulders, began to whisper, or rather to hum in her peculiar

bass voice:

“Look you, now! It’s like this. There’s no Boles at all, and there’s no Teresa either. But what’s that to you? Is it a hard thing for you to draw your pen over paper? Eh? Ah, and *you*, too! Still such a little fair-haired boy! There’s nobody at all, neither Boles, nor Teresa, only me. There you have it, and much good may it do you!”

“Pardon me!” said I, altogether flabbergasted by such a reception, “what is it all about? There’s no Boles, you say?”

“No. So it is.”

“And no Teresa either?”

“And no Teresa. I’m Teresa.”

I didn’t understand it at all. I fixed my eyes upon her, and tried to make out which of us was taking leave of his or her senses. But she went again to the table, searched about for something, came back to me, and said in an offended tone:

“If it was so hard for you to write to Boles, look, there’s your letter, take it! Others will write for me.”

I looked. In her hand was my letter to Boles. Phew!

“Listen, Teresa! What is the meaning of all this? Why must you get others to write for you when I have already written it, and you haven’t sent it?”

“Sent it where?”

“Why, to this-Boles.”

“There’s no such person.”

I absolutely did not understand it. There was nothing for me but to spit and go. Then she explained.

“What is it?” she said, still offended. “There’s no such person, I tell you,” and she extended her arms as if she herself did not understand why there should be no such person. “But I wanted him to be... Am I then not a human creature like the rest of them? Yes, yes, I know, I know, of course... Yet no harm was done to any one by my writing to him that I can see...”

“Pardon me-to whom?”

“To Boles, of course.”

“But he doesn’t exist.”

“Alas! alas! But what if he doesn’t? He doesn’t exist, but he *might*! I write to him, and it looks as if he did exist. And Teresa-that’s me, and he replies to me, and then I write to him again...”

I understood at last. And I felt so sick, so miserable, so ashamed,

somehow. Alongside of me, not three yards away, lived a human creature who had nobody in the world to treat her kindly, affectionately, and this human being had invented a friend for herself!

“Look, now! you wrote me a letter to Boles, and I gave it to some one else to read it to me; and when they read it to me I listened and fancied that Boles was there. And I asked you to write me a letter from Boles to Teresa—that is to me. When they write such a letter for me, and read it to me, I feel quite sure that Boles is there. And life grows easier for me in consequence.”

“Deuce take you for a blockhead!” said I to myself when I heard this.

And from thenceforth, regularly, twice a week, I wrote a letter to Boles, and an answer from Boles to Teresa. I wrote those answers well... She, of course, listened to them, and wept like anything, roared, I should say, with her bass voice. And in return for my thus moving her to tears by real letters from the imaginary Boles, she began to mend the holes I had in my socks, shirts, and other articles of clothing. Subsequently, about three months after this history began, they put her in prison for something or other. No doubt by this time she is dead.

My acquaintance shook the ash from his cigarette, looked pensively up at the sky, and thus concluded:

Well, well, the more a human creature has tasted of bitter things the more it hungers after the sweet things of life. And we, wrapped round in the rags of our virtues, and regarding others through the mist of our self-sufficiency, and persuaded of our universal impeccability, do not understand this.

And the whole thing turns out pretty stupidly-and very cruelly. The fallen classes, we say. And who are the fallen classes, I should like to know? They are, first of all, people with the same bones, flesh, and blood and nerves as ourselves. We have been told this day after day for ages. And we actually listen-and the devil only knows how hideous the whole thing is. Or are we completely depraved by the loud sermonising of humanism? In reality, we also are fallen folks, and, so far as I can see, very deeply fallen into the abyss of self-sufficiency and the conviction of our own superiority. But enough of this. It is all as old as the hills-so old that it is a shame to speak of it. Very old indeed—yes, that’s what it is!

THE EMBROIDERED TOWEL

BY MIKHAIL BULGAKOV

Translated from the Russian by S.E. Torrens

If a person has never ridden on a tipcart over ^[2]wild, backcountry roads, then telling him about it is pointless: all the same he won't understand. And for the person who has done it, well, I don't want to remind him of it.

I'll say briefly: It took a full 24 hours for the cart driver and I to travel the 40 versts^[3] that separate the district town of Grachevka from Murya Hospital. It was uncanny how we arrived almost to the minute: At two pm on September 16, 1917 we were at the last silo on the edge of that most wonderful town of Grachevka and on September 17th of that same, unforgettable year at five minutes past two o'clock in the afternoon, I stood on dying grass, beaten down and sodden with September rains, in the courtyard of Murya Hospital. I stood in the courtyard, legs ossified, dazed, I mentally flipped through the pages of my text books, stupidly trying to recall, if such an ailment did indeed exist or if I had dreamt of it last night in the village of Grabilovka – that illness where a man's limbs go rigid? What is its damned name in Latin? Each of my muscles ached with an intolerable pain, like that of a toothache. I won't even mention my toes. They no longer moved in my boots, instead they lay peacefully, like wooden stumps. I confess, in a burst of disheartened passion I whispered curses on the medical profession and the entrance application I submitted to the University Rector five years ago. During this entire time, it drizzled from above as if through a sieve. My coat welled up like a sponge. With the fingers of my right hand, I futilely tried to grasp the handle of the suitcase and finally I spat on the wet grass in frustration. My fingers unable to grip anything, my mind, filled with all sorts of facts from interesting medical textbooks, I finally remembered the illness – palsy...

"Paralysis," I desperately, the devil knows why, said to myself.

– T..t... travelling on your roads, – I said with blue, wooden lips, – takes

a lot of g... getting used to...

I said spitefully, for some reason, to the cart driver, even though the state of the road wasn't his fault.

– Ah, comrade Doctor, – retorted the coachman, his lips barely moving beneath a pale mustache, – I've been traveling this road for 15 years and I still can't get used to it.

I shuddered, dismally gazing back at the white, peeling paint of the two-story building; at the unbleached log walls of the feldsher's cottage; at my own future residence: a two-story, straight-lined house, with mysterious, coffin-like windows. I slowly sighed. And then, dully, there came to me not Latin words, but a sweet phrase sung, in my dazed-from-the-journey-and-cold mind, by a plump tenor wearing blue tights:

"I greet you home, so chaste and pure..."^[4]

– Goodbye, until we meet again gold and red swathed stage of the Bolshoi theater, goodbye Moscow and your shop windows, ah, goodbye.

"I'll put on my overcoat next time," I thought in baleful forsakenness as I yanked the suitcase by the straps with my stiff hands. But next time it will already be October. Maybe I should wear two overcoats. I certainly won't return before a month passes; I won't travel back to Grachevka. Think of it – I had to stay the night! We traveled twenty versts and night fell... darkness like a tomb... night... we had to stay the night in Grabilovke, a school teacher took us in... and then this morning we left at 7 in the morning. And, God, how we traveled. Slower than a pedestrian. One wheel caught in a pothole, the other spinning in the air, my suitcase falling on my feet – bump – wobbling to the side, then to the other, now sliding forward, now back. And from above the drizzle drizzling, freezing your bones. How could I imagine that in the middle of a foul, sour, September, a man could freeze in a field the same as in the midst of a bitter winter?! Ah, it seems that he can. And while you die a slow death, you see mile after mile of the same thing. On the right – humpy picked over fields, to the left – a straggly grove, and across from that ragged, graying izbas^[5] – maybe five or six of them. And seemingly not a living soul to be found within them. Silence, silence all around."

At last, the suitcase fell over. The driver leaned over his stomach and shoved the case directly at me. I wanted to hold it by the strap, but my swollen hands refused to work, and my companion, stuffed with books and all manner of junk, crashed to the ground, striking my legs.

– Oh Lord – began the driver, startled, but I didn't make any complaints-

my legs were already good for nothing but to be thrown away.

– Hey, anyone here? Hey! – yelled the driver beating his hands like a rooster his wings. – Hey, I’ve brought the doctor!

At this, faces appeared in the dark glass of the feldsher’s cottage, pressing into the glass. The door banged and a man in a ragged coat and boots hobbled towards me across the grass. He hurriedly and respectfully removed his cap, ran two steps toward me, smiled embarrassedly for some reason, and hoarsely greeted me.

– Greetings, comrade doctor.

– And who are you? – I asked.

– Egorich – the man introduced himself, – the watchman here. We have been waiting for you, waiting...

At this he grabbed onto the suitcase, threw it up onto his shoulder and carried it off. I limped after him, unsuccessfully trying to shove a hand into my trouser pocket to pull out my billfold.

When it comes down to it, a man needs very little. But above all else he needs fire. Travelling through the Murya back country, I remembered how, back in Moscow, I had vowed to conduct myself respectably. My youthful appearance betrayed me at first sight. I was introduced to everyone:

– Doctor So and So.

And without fail, every single person raised his eyebrows and asked:

– Are you really? But I was sure you must still be a student.

– No, I completed my studies, – I sullenly replied, but thinking to myself: “I must start wearing glasses, that’s what I must do.” But donning glasses served no purpose, my eyes being healthy and unclouded by life experience. Unable to ward off the sweet, condescending smiles with the help of glasses, I instead tried to develop an especially authoritative habit. I tried to speak in a measured and weighty tone, to constrain all possible impatient movements. To not run, as people of twenty-three and who have just completed university might, but to walk. I understand now, with the hindsight of many years, that it all came across quite poorly.

At the present moment, I had violated my unwritten code of behavior. I wore a single sock and sat huddled in the kitchen, not tucked away in a study somewhere, but in the kitchen like some fire worshiper eagerly reaching for the blazing birch logs in the stove.

To my left lay a turned over washtub and on it my boots. Alongside them rested a rooster plucked bare, his neck bloodstained, and his many, colored

breast feathers piled beside him. Despite my numbed state, I had still managed to do a great number of things which required a great deal of effort. I confirmed Aksinya Vostronosaya, the wife of Yegorich, in her duties as my cook. The rooster, as a result of this, died by her hand. I was obliged to eat him. I met everyone. The feldsher^[6] was called Demyan Lukich, the midwives – Pelagea Ivanovna and Anna Nikolaevna. I managed to tour the hospital and was struck by the sheer quantity of medical instruments. Not only were there lots of instruments, I was forced to admit (only to myself, of course) that I didn't have a clue as to what use most of these shining, virgin tools could be put to. Not only had I never held them in my hand, but I openly admit that I had never before even laid eyes upon them.

– Hmm – I intoned meaningfully, – you have an exquisite stock of medical instruments. Hmm...

– Of course, it is – Demyan Lukich sweetly noted – it is the result of the efforts of your predecessor, Leopold Leopoldovich. He operated from morning to night.

I broke into a cold sweat and stared dully at the polished, mirrored cabinets.

We left to walk through the empty wards and I was certain that they could easily accommodate 40 people.

– Leopold Leopoldovich sometimes tended as many as 50, – Demyan Lukich assured me, and Anna Nikolaevna, a woman with a crown of grey hair, for some reason added:

– You, Doctor, are so young... so young... It is immediately noticeable. You look like a student.

“Curse you devil” I thought – How alike you all are, honestly.”

But muttering through gritted teeth:

– Hmm, no, I...that is.. yes, I am young.

Then we went down to the pharmacy and I immediately saw that it had everything necessary and more besides. The two dark rooms smelled of herbs and the shelves were loaded with everything imaginable. There were even patented, foreign medicines, and is it necessary to add that I had never heard even a rumor of them before?

– Leopold Leopoldovich ordered all these – Pelagea Ivanovna proudly announced.

“This Leopold was a real genius”, I thought filled with respect for the enigmatic Leopold who had left the quiet village of Murya.

Besides fire, a man needs to be able to adapt to his surroundings. The rooster had long ago been eaten by me; the mattress – stuffed with straw by Yegorich and made up with bedding; a lamp set to burn in the study – in my residence. I sat spellbound staring at the third achievement of the legendary Leopold: a bookshelf filled to breaking with books. A single series on surgery in both Russian and German ran on for some thirty volumes. And therapeutics! And the wonderful leather-bound atlases!

Evening was coming and I was beginning to adapt.

“It’s not my fault – I stubbornly and excruciatingly repeated to myself, – I have my diploma – fifteen A’s, I even told them that I wanted to work as an assistant doctor. No. They smiled and said: “You’ll adapt”. Here you are and get used to it. And what if they bring in a hernia? Tell me, how am I supposed to “adapt” to a hernia? And what’s more, how will a hernia patient fare under my treatment? Will he adapt to that other world? (At this a shiver ran down my spine)...

And a septic appendix? A diphtheric croup amongst the village boys? When is a tracheotomy warranted? But even without a tracheotomy I won’t know what I’m doing... or a birth! A birth – how could I forget! Posterior presentation. What am I going to do? What? I’m such an idiot! I should have refused this position! I needed to! They would have found some other Leopold.”

In the twilight, I anxiously paced the study.

When I drew near the lamp, I saw my pallid face alongside the flicking flame framed by the boundless darkness of fields beyond the windowpane. “I look like False Dmitry,” I foolishly thought and went to sit at the table again.

I sat worrying for nigh on two hours until my nerves could no longer bear up under the cumulations of my fearful imaginings. I began to calm myself and even come up with some plans of action.

Look, they say there are very few patients being brought in at the moment, in the villages they are breaking flax, far from the roads...

“They’ll bring you a hernia patient,” the dour voice in my head interrupted, – a person with a cold (an altogether manageable illness) won’t come, but a hernia, that they’ll bring you, do calm yourself good doctor”.

The voice wasn’t stupid, was it? I shuddered.

“Shut up, – I told the voice, – it won’t necessarily be a hernia. No need for a nervous breakdown. Now that I’ve started, there’s no turning back.”

“In for the penny, in for the pound” snidely retorted the voice.

Well, I... I won't do a thing without my medical book... If I have to write a prescription, I can think about what to do while washing my hands. My reference manual will be open and laying on top of the appointment book. I'll prescribe useful, simple medicines. Like, for example, a 5mg sachet of sodium salicylate^[7] three times a day...

"You can prescribe baking soda!" my internal companion mocked.

What does baking soda have to do with anything? I can prescribe syrup of ipecac. 180cc. or maybe 200cc. There, watch me do that.

I sat down alone by the lamp and halfheartedly flipped through a pharmaceutical manual, though no one currently needed a prescription of ipecac syrup^[8], and so happened to run across "insipin". While similar to essence of sulphuric quinine acid...it has absolutely no taste of quinine! But what is it for? And how to prescribe it? What is it? A powder? Oh, the devil take it!

"Insipin smippen. But what will you do with the hernia patient?" the voice relentlessly stoked my fears.

I'll put him in the bath – I frantically affirmed. Yes, in the bathtub. And I'll try to fix it."

"A strangulated one, good doctor! Damn good a bath will be! A strangulated hernia -Fear sang with a demon voice. -You'll need to operate..."

Defeated, I almost burst into tears. Send whatever you wish, I prayed to the darkness beyond the window, anything but a strangulated hernia.

Exhaustion sang now:

"Lay yourself down and sleep, ill-fated physician. Sleep well, and in the morning all will be clear. Calm yourself, young loony. Look, the darkness outside the window is undisturbed. The frozen fields sleep. There is no hernia patient. In the morning it will be clear. Adapt... Sleep... forget the reference book...you wouldn't know a herniated disc now if it slapped you across the face..."

How he arrived, I have no idea. I remember the bolt on the door groaning, Aksinya shrieking something. Oh, and also a cart creaking outside the window.

He wore no hat. His coat was unbuttoned. A matted beard. Crazy eyes.

He crossed himself and fell on his knees and thumped his forehead to the floor. He is here for me.

“This is it,” I fatally thought.

– What’s wrong with you, what wrong with you, – I muttered while tugging at a grey sleeve.

His face skewed, and he, stifling a sob, garbled disjointed words in answer:

– Doctor...sir... she is my only,... my only, only, – he shouted suddenly at a volume that rattled the lampshade – Oh God, you... oh... – He wrung his hands in anguish and again banged his forehead to the floorboards as if he wished he could crush it. – Why? What am I being punished for? How have I angered you?

– What? What happened?! – I shouted, feeling my face going cold.

He jumped to his feet and, rushing, whispered, thus:

– Good doctor... whatever you want... I’ll give you money... take money, whatever you want. Whatever you want. We’ll deliver food to you... Just don’t let her die. Only that she won’t die. She’ll be lame. That’s fine. Let her be lame! – he shouted at the ceiling. – I have enough to feed her. I have enough.

The bloodless face of Aksinya appeared in the black rectangle of the door. Dread filled my heart.

– What? What is it? Speak! – I yelled. He stopped, his eyes became vacant and in a whisper, as if it was a secret, he told me:

– She fell in the brake...

– In the brake...in the brake? – I repeated. – What is that?

– Flax, they were breaking flax, Doctor... – Aksinya whispered in explanation, – a brake – it is for breaking flax...

“Here is it. Here is the start of it. Oh, why did I come here!” I thought in agony.

– Who?

– My daughter, – he answered in a whisper, and then he shouted: – Help me! – and again he fell upon the floor, and his hair, cut in a bowl-cut, fell into his eyes.

* * *

The oil lamp, with its crooked tin shade burned hotly with two flames. On the operating table, on white, fresh smelling oilcloth, I saw her, and the hernia patient faded from my mind.

Pale, strawberry-blond hair hung off the table in a tangled, dry, mat. The

braid was gigantic, the end of it brushing the floor. Her calico print skirt was torn and the blood on it different colors – reddish brown, oily red, deep poppy. The color of the oil lamp seemed alive and golden, but her face papery, white, the nose sharpened.

On her face, white and still as plaster, a truly uncommon beauty was fading. Not often, not ever, do you encounter such a face.

A full ten seconds of silence filled the operating room, but through the closed door you could hear someone's deafening shouts, and the banging, the banging of his head.

"He's gone mad, – I thought – and probably the attendants are giving him a tranquilizer... How is it that she is such a beauty? He has the right cut of the face. It's obvious the mother was beautiful... He is a widower..."

– Is he a widower? – I subconsciously whispered.

– A widower, – Pelagea Ivanovna quietly answered.

In one crude, violent movement, Demyan Lukich ripped the girl's skirt from the hem to the waist and exposed her. I looked her over and what I saw surpassed all of my fears. Her left leg was not, strictly speaking, there. Below her shattered knee lay a bloody mass, red mangled muscles from which protruded white shards of bone at all angles. The right leg was broken at the shin in such a way that both ends of the bone shot out, breaking through the skin. At the end of this, her foot lay lifeless, twisted to the side.

– Yes, – the feldsher uttered quietly and then said nothing more.

I came out of my stupor and felt for her pulse. In her cold hand, it was not there. Only after several seconds I found the scarcely noticeable rare ripple. It passed...there was a pause, during the length of which I managed to glance at the bluing wings of her nose and her white lips... I wanted to already pronounce that it was over... but fortunately I waited...again the hint of a pulse.

"That is how the life of a lacerated being is extinguished, – I thought, – there is nothing you can do..."

– Camphor. – I said authoritatively, not knowing my own voice.

Anna Nikolaevna leaned to my ear and whispered:

– Why doctor? Don't torture her. Why add an injection? Now you should go... You won't save her.

I angrily and darkly glared at her and said:

– I asked for camphor...

And Anna Nikolaevna, her mortified face flaming, rushed to the table and

broke the ampule.

The feldsher also, it appeared, did not approve of the camphor. Still, he deftly and quickly took up the syringe and the yellow oil slid under the skin at her shoulder.

“Die. Die faster, I thought, – die. What am I going to do with you otherwise?”

– Now she will die – the feldsher whispered as though guessing my thoughts. He glanced over at the sheet, but clearly he thought: it would be a shame to bloody the sheet. Still, in a few seconds it would need to be pulled over her. She lay as a corpse, but she didn’t die. Inside my head, it suddenly became bright, like under the glass ceiling of my university’s distant anatomical theater.

– More camphor – I croaked.

And again, the feldsher dutifully injected the oil.

– Can it be that she won’t die? – I despairingly thought. – Can it be that I will have to...

Inside my brain was all illuminated, and then without any textbook, without advice, without assistance, I understood, with an unshakable iron conviction, that now I must, for the first time in my life and on a dying girl, perform an amputation. And the girl would die under the knife. Oh, she would die under the knife. She doesn’t even have any blood left! It had escaped from her mangled legs over the 10 versts to the hospital. It wasn’t even clear if she could feel anything now, if she could hear. She kept silent. Oh, why doesn’t she die? What will her witless father say?

– Prepare for an amputation, – I said to the feldsher in someone else’s voice.

The midwife looked wildly at me, but in the eyes of the feldsher flashed a spark of sympathy and he gathered up the instruments. Under his hands the primus stove^[9] began to roar.

A quarter of an hour gone. With superstitious horror, I peered into her darkening eye, lifting up the cold eyelid. I can’t understand it. How can a half-dead body live? Drops of sweat ran uncontrollably down my forehead from under the edge of my white cap. Pelagea Ivanovna wiped the salty sweat with gauze. Caffeine now mixed with the last of the blood flowing through the girl’s veins. Was it necessary to have used it or not? Anna Nikolaevna gently rubbed the swelling caused by the saline injection at her hip. And the girl lived. I took up the scalpel, trying to imitate (once during

my time at the university I had observed an amputation) someone or other... I now begged fate, that in the next half hour she would not die...

“Let her die in the ward, when I have finished the operation...”

My common sense kicked in, spurred by the extraordinary circumstances. Like an experienced butcher, I circled and deftly sliced through the thigh. The skin, parting, did not release a single drop of blood.

“If the blood vessels begin to bleed what will I do?” – I thought, and like a wolf eyed the pile of forceps. I cut away a huge hunk of female flesh and one of the blood vessels – it looked like a whitish tube, but not a single drop of blood flowed from it. I closed it with the forceps and moved on. I plunged these forceps everywhere there might be a blood vessel.. “Artery... Artery.. where the devil, is it?...” The operating room looked like a real clinic. Forceps were clamped in bunches. The nurses used them to pull away the flesh with gauze and I began to cut through the round bone with a fine-toothed saw. “Why doesn’t she die?... It is astounding...Oh, how much a person can live through!”

The bone fell. In the hand of Demyan Lukich rested all that remained of what had once been the girl’s leg. Shreds, meat, bones! All of this was tossed aside and on the table the girl lay, seemingly smaller by a third, with the stump pulled to the side. “Hang in there a little bit more...don’t die, – I passionately willed, – wait until you are in the ward, let me escape from this most terrible situation of my life with that.”

Then they handed over the suturing thread and with shaking knees I sewed the skin with sparse stitches... but stopped, took stock and with inspired recognition, inserted a drain, applied a gauze pad... sweat clouded my eyes and it seemed to me I was in a sauna.

I blew out a breath. It was hard to look at the stump, at her waxen face.

– Alive? – I asked.

– Alive... – Like a silent echo the feldsher and Anna Nikolaevna answered in unison.

– She will live for a minute more, – one set of lips, the feldsher, whispered noiselessly in my ear. Then, breaking off, he carefully advised: – The second leg, maybe, it would be better not to touch it, doctor. Gauze, you know, we can wrap it with that... otherwise she won’t make it to the ward... don’t you think? And it would be better that she didn’t die on the operating table...

– Plaster – I hoarsely commanded – pushed by an unknown strength.

The entire floor was splattered with white spots, we were all covered in sweat. The half-corpse lay motionless. The right leg was wrapped in a plaster cast, except for the gaping hole I had ingeniously left open as a window to the fracture.

– She lives... – the feldsher wheezed in surprise.

All that was left was to lift her, and on the sheet the great ruins – a third of her body we left on the operating table.

In the corridor the shadows wavered, the attendants scurried about, and I saw the disheveled man slink along the wall and let out a dry wail. But they took him away. And it was quiet. In the surgery, I washed my hands, bloody to the elbows.

– Doctor, you have undoubtedly done many amputations? – Anna Nikolaevna abruptly asked. – You did very, very, well – just as well as Leopold...

From her lips, the word “Leopold” sounded like “The Doyen^[10]”.

I distrustfully searched their faces. And in everyone’s, Demyan Lukich’s and Pelagea Ivanova’s, I registered surprise and respect in their eyes.

– Hmm, well, I, I’ve only done it twice, you see...

Why did I lie? It is not even clear to me now.

In the hospital it was quiet. Completely.

– When she dies, be sure to come and get me, – I ordered the feldsher in a low voice and he, rather than saying “Alright” instead respectfully answered:

– I’m at your service...

In a few minutes I was again beside the green lamp in the study of the doctor’s apartment. The building was quiet.

An ashy face reflected in the blackened glass.

“No, I am not like the False Dimitri, and I see you’ve aged somehow – creases over the bridge of your nose... any moment they will knock... They will tell me “She has died”

“Yes, I’ll go and look at her a last time...Any moment I’ll hear the knock...”

* * *

A knock sounded at the door. This was after two and a half months. Through the window one of the first winter suns shone.

He came in, I saw him only then. Yes, truly the cut of his face was right. About forty-five. Eyes sparkling.

Then rustling... on two crutches hobbled the enchantingly beautiful, one-legged girl, in a wide skirt, embroidered at the hem with a red border.

She looked at me; her cheeks were colored with pink paint.

– In Moscow... In Moscow... – and I stood to write the address – They can make you a prosthetic there – an artificial leg.

– Kiss his hand, – the father unexpectedly blurted.

I was so startled that instead of her lips I kissed her nose.

Then, swaying on the crutches, she unfolded a bundle and out fell a long, snow-white towel embroidered with a simple red rooster. This was what she had hidden under her pillow during my checks. I remember the thread lay on the table.

– I can't take it, – I harshly said and even shook my head. But on the girl appeared such an expression, such eyes... and so I took it.

And it hung in my bedroom in Murya for many years before traveling about with me. In the end it was dilapidated, faded, moth-eaten, and finally it disappeared, just as memories fade and disappear.

NIKOLAY GOGOL

THE NOSE

I

On the 25th March, 18-, a very strange occurrence took place in St Petersburg. On the Ascension Avenue there lived a barber of the name of Ivan Jakovlevitch. He had lost his family name, and on his sign-board, on which was depicted the head of a gentleman with one cheek soaped, the only inscription to be read was, "Blood-letting done here."

On this particular morning he awoke pretty early. Becoming aware of the smell of fresh-baked bread, he sat up a little in bed, and saw his wife, who had a special partiality for coffee, in the act of taking some fresh-baked bread out of the oven.

"To-day, Prasskovna Ossipovna," he said, "I do not want any coffee; I should like a fresh loaf with onions."

"The blockhead may eat bread only as far as I am concerned," said his wife to herself; "then I shall have a chance of getting some coffee." And she threw a loaf on the table.

For the sake of propriety, Ivan Jakovlevitch drew a coat over his shirt, sat down at the table, shook out some salt for himself, prepared two onions, assumed a serious expression, and began to cut the bread. After he had cut the loaf in two halves, he looked, and to his great astonishment saw something whitish sticking in it. He carefully poked round it with his knife, and felt it with his finger.

"Quite firmly fixed!" he murmured in his beard. "What can it be?"

He put in his finger, and drew out-a nose!

Ivan Jakovlevitch at first let his hands fall from sheer astonishment; then he rubbed his eyes and began to feel it. A nose, an actual nose; and, moreover, it seemed to be the nose of an acquaintance! Alarm and terror were depicted in Ivan's face; but these feelings were slight in comparison with the disgust which took possession of his wife.

"Whose nose have you cut off, you monster?" she screamed, her face red with anger. "You scoundrel! You tippler! I myself will report you to the police! Such a rascal! Many customers have told me that while you were shaving them, you held them so tight by the nose that they could hardly sit still."

But Ivan Jakovlevitch was more dead than alive; he saw at once that this nose could belong to no other than to Kovaloff, a member of the Municipal

Committee whom he shaved every Sunday and Wednesday.

“Stop, Prasskovna Ossipovna! I will wrap it in a piece of cloth and place it in the corner. There it may remain for the present; later on I will take it away.”

“No, not there! Shall I endure an amputated nose in my room? You understand nothing except how to strop a razor. You know nothing of the duties and obligations of a respectable man. You vagabond! You good-for-nothing! Am I to undertake all responsibility for you at the police-office? Ah, you soap-smearer! You blockhead! Take it away where you like, but don't let it stay under my eyes!”

Ivan Jakovlevitch stood there flabbergasted. He thought and thought, and knew not what he thought.

“The devil knows how that happened!” he said at last, scratching his head behind his ear. “Whether I came home drunk last night or not, I really don't know; but in all probability this is a quite extraordinary occurrence, for a loaf is something baked and a nose is something different. I don't understand the matter at all.” And Ivan Jakovlevitch was silent. The thought that the police might find him in unlawful possession of a nose and arrest him, robbed him of all presence of mind. Already he began to have visions of a red collar with silver braid and of a sword-and he trembled all over.

At last he finished dressing himself, and to the accompaniment of the emphatic exhortations of his spouse, he wrapped up the nose in a cloth and issued into the street.

He intended to lose it somewhere-either at somebody's door, or in a public square, or in a narrow alley; but just then, in order to complete his bad luck, he was met by an acquaintance, who showered inquiries upon him. “Hullo, Ivan Jakovlevitch! Whom are you going to shave so early in the morning?” etc., so that he could find no suitable opportunity to do what he wanted. Later on he did let the nose drop, but a sentry bore down upon him with his halberd, and said, “Look out! You have let something drop!” and Ivan Jakovlevitch was obliged to pick it up and put it in his pocket.

A feeling of despair began to take possession of him; all the more as the streets became more thronged and the merchants began to open their shops. At last he resolved to go to the Isaac Bridge, where perhaps he might succeed in throwing it into the Neva.

But my conscience is a little uneasy that I have not yet given any detailed information about Ivan Jakovlevitch, an estimable man in many ways.

Like every honest Russian tradesman, Ivan Jakovlevitch was a terrible drunkard, and although he shaved other people's faces every day, his own was always unshaved. His coat (he never wore an overcoat) was quite mottled, i.e. it had been black, but become brownish-yellow; the collar was quite shiny, and instead of the three buttons, only the threads by which they had been fastened were to be seen.

Ivan Jakovlevitch was a great cynic, and when Kovaloff, the member of the Municipal Committee, said to him, as was his custom while being shaved, "Your hands always smell, Ivan Jakovlevitch!" the latter answered, "What do they smell of?" "I don't know, my friend, but they smell very strong." Ivan Jakovlevitch after taking a pinch of snuff would then, by way of reprisals, set to work to soap him on the cheek, the upper lip, behind the ears, on the chin, and everywhere.

This worthy man now stood on the Isaac Bridge. At first he looked round him, then he leant on the railings of the bridge, as though he wished to look down and see how many fish were swimming past, and secretly threw the nose, wrapped in a little piece of cloth, into the water. He felt as though a ton weight had been lifted off him, and laughed cheerfully. Instead, however, of going to shave any officials, he turned his steps to a building, the sign-board of which bore the legend "Teas served here," in order to have a glass of punch, when suddenly he perceived at the other end of the bridge a police inspector of imposing exterior, with long whiskers, three-cornered hat, and sword hanging at his side. He nearly fainted; but the police inspector beckoned to him with his hand and said, "Come here, my dear sir."

Ivan Jakovlevitch, knowing how a gentleman should behave, took his hat off quickly, went towards the police inspector and said, "I hope you are in the best of health."

"Never mind my health. Tell me, my friend, why you were standing on the bridge."

"By heaven, gracious sir, I was on the way to my customers, and only looked down to see if the river was flowing quickly."

"That is a lie! You won't get out of it like that. Confess the truth."

"I am willing to shave Your Grace two or even three times a week gratis," answered Ivan Jakovlevitch.

"No, my friend, don't put yourself out! Three barbers are busy with me already, and reckon it a high honour that I let them show me their skill. Now then, out with it! What were you doing there?"

Ivan Jakovlevitch grew pale. But here the strange episode vanishes in mist, and what further happened is not known.

II

Kovaloff, the member of the Municipal Committee, awoke fairly early that morning, and made a droning noise—"Brr! Brr!"—through his lips, as he always did, though he could not say why. He stretched himself, and told his valet to give him a little mirror which was on the table. He wished to look at the heat-boil which had appeared on his nose the previous evening; but to his great astonishment, he saw that instead of his nose he had a perfectly smooth vacancy in his face. Thoroughly alarmed, he ordered some water to be brought, and rubbed his eyes with a towel. Sure enough, he had no longer a nose! Then he sprang out of bed, and shook himself violently! No, no nose any more! He dressed himself and went at once to the police superintendent.

But before proceeding further, we must certainly give the reader some information about Kovaloff, so that he may know what sort of a man this member of the Municipal Committee really was. These committee-men, who obtain that title by means of certificates of learning, must not be compared with the committee-men appointed for the Caucasus district, who are of quite a different kind. The learned committee-man-but Russia is such a wonderful country that when one committee-man is spoken of all the others from Riga to Kamschatka refer it to themselves. The same is also true of all other titled officials. Kovaloff had been a Caucasian committee-man two years previously, and could not forget that he had occupied that position; but in order to enhance his own importance, he never called himself "committee-man" but "Major."

"Listen, my dear," he used to say when he met an old woman in the street who sold shirt-fronts; "go to my house in Sadovaia Street and ask 'Does Major Kovaloff live here?'" Any child can tell you where it is."

Accordingly we will call him for the future Major Kovaloff. It was his custom to take a daily walk on the Neffsky Avenue. The collar of his shirt was always remarkably clean and stiff. He wore the same style of whiskers as those that are worn by governors of districts, architects, and regimental doctors; in short, all those who have full red cheeks and play a good game of whist. These whiskers grow straight across the cheek towards the nose.

Major Kovaloff wore a number of seals, on some of which were engraved armorial bearings, and others the names of the days of the week. He had come to St Petersburg with the view of obtaining some position

corresponding to his rank, if possible that of vice-governor of a province; but he was prepared to be content with that of a bailiff in some department or other. He was, moreover, not disinclined to marry, but only such a lady who could bring with her a dowry of two hundred thousand roubles. Accordingly, the reader can judge for himself what his sensations were when he found in his face, instead of a fairly symmetrical nose, a broad, flat vacancy.

To increase his misfortune, not a single droshky was to be seen in the street, and so he was obliged to proceed on foot. He wrapped himself up in his cloak, and held his handkerchief to his face as though his nose bled. "But perhaps it is all only my imagination; it is impossible that a nose should drop off in such a silly way," he thought, and stepped into a confectioner's shop in order to look into the mirror.

Fortunately no customer was in the shop; only small shop-boys were cleaning it out, and putting chairs and tables straight. Others with sleepy faces were carrying fresh cakes on trays, and yesterday's newspapers stained with coffee were still lying about. "Thank God no one is here!" he said to himself. "Now I can look at myself leisurely."

He stepped gingerly up to a mirror and looked.

"What an infernal face!" he exclaimed, and spat with disgust. "If there were only something there instead of the nose, but there is absolutely nothing."

He bit his lips with vexation, left the confectioner's, and resolved, quite contrary to his habit, neither to look nor smile at anyone on the street. Suddenly he halted as if rooted to the spot before a door, where something extraordinary happened. A carriage drew up at the entrance; the carriage door was opened, and a gentleman in uniform came out and hurried up the steps. How great was Kovaloff's terror and astonishment when he saw that it was his own nose!

At this extraordinary sight, everything seemed to turn round with him. He felt as though he could hardly keep upright on his legs; but, though trembling all over as though with fever, he resolved to wait till the nose should return to the carriage. After about two minutes the nose actually came out again. It wore a gold-embroidered uniform with a stiff, high collar, trousers of chamois leather, and a sword hung at its side. The hat, adorned with a plume, showed that it held the rank of a state-councillor. It was obvious that it was paying "duty-calls." It looked round on both sides, called to the coachman "Drive on," and got into the carriage, which drove away.

Poor Kovaloff nearly lost his reason. He did not know what to think of this extraordinary procedure. And indeed how was it possible that the nose, which only yesterday he had on his face, and which could neither walk nor drive, should wear a uniform. He ran after the carriage, which fortunately had stopped a short way off before the Grand Bazar of Moscow. He hurried towards it and pressed through a crowd of beggar-women with their faces bound up, leaving only two openings for the eyes, over whom he had formerly so often made merry.

There were only a few people in front of the Bazar. Kovaloff was so agitated that he could decide on nothing, and looked for the nose everywhere. At last he saw it standing before a shop. It seemed half buried in its stiff collar, and was attentively inspecting the wares displayed.

“How can I get at it?” thought Kovaloff. “Everything-the uniform, the hat, and so on-show that it is a state-councillor. How the deuce has that happened?”

He began to cough discreetly near it, but the nose paid him not the least attention.

“Honourable sir,” said Kovaloff at last, plucking up courage, “honourable sir.”

“What do you want?” asked the nose, and turned round.

“It seems to me strange, most respected sir-you should know where you belong-and I find you all of a sudden-where? Judge yourself.”

“Pardon me, I do not understand what you are talking about. Explain yourself more distinctly.”

“How shall I make my meaning plainer to him?” Then plucking up fresh courage, he continued, “Naturally-besides I am a Major. You must admit it is not befitting that I should go about without a nose. An old apple-woman on the Ascension Bridge may carry on her business without one, but since I am on the look out for a post; besides in many houses I am acquainted with ladies of high position-Madame Tchektyriev, wife of a state-councillor, and many others. So you see-I do not know, honourable sir, what you-” (here the Major shrugged his shoulders). “Pardon me; if one regards the matter from the point of view of duty and honour-you will yourself understand-”

“I understand nothing,” answered the nose. “I repeat, please explain yourself more distinctly.”

“Honourable sir,” said Kovaloff with dignity, “I do not know how I am to understand your words. It seems to me the matter is as clear as possible. Or

do you wish-but you are after all my own nose!"

The nose looked at the Major and wrinkled its forehead. "There you are wrong, respected sir; I am myself. Besides, there can be no close relations between us. To judge by the buttons of your uniform, you must be in quite a different department to mine." So saying, the nose turned away.

Kovaloff was completely puzzled; he did not know what to do, and still less what to think. At this moment he heard the pleasant rustling of a lady's dress, and there approached an elderly lady wearing a quantity of lace, and by her side her graceful daughter in a white dress which set off her slender figure to advantage, and wearing a light straw hat. Behind the ladies marched a tall lackey with long whiskers.

Kovaloff advanced a few steps, adjusted his cambric collar, arranged his seals which hung by a little gold chain, and with smiling face fixed his eyes on the graceful lady, who bowed lightly like a spring flower, and raised to her brow her little white hand with transparent fingers. He smiled still more when he spied under the brim of her hat her little round chin, and part of her cheek faintly tinted with rose-colour. But suddenly he sprang back as though he had been scorched. He remembered that he had nothing but an absolute blank in place of a nose, and tears started to his eyes. He turned round in order to tell the gentleman in uniform that he was only a state-councillor in appearance, but really a scoundrel and a rascal, and nothing else but his own nose; but the nose was no longer there. He had had time to go, doubtless in order to continue his visits.

His disappearance plunged Kovaloff into despair. He went back and stood for a moment under a colonnade, looking round him on all sides in hope of perceiving the nose somewhere. He remembered very well that it wore a hat with a plume in it and a gold-embroidered uniform; but he had not noticed the shape of the cloak, nor the colour of the carriages and the horses, nor even whether a lackey stood behind it, and, if so, what sort of livery he wore. Moreover, so many carriages were passing that it would have been difficult to recognise one, and even if he had done so, there would have been no means of stopping it.

The day was fine and sunny. An immense crowd was passing to and fro in the Neffsky Avenue; a variegated stream of ladies flowed along the pavement. There was his acquaintance, the Privy Councillor, whom he was accustomed to style "General," especially when strangers were present. There was Iarygin, his intimate friend who always lost in the evenings at whist; and

there another Major, who had obtained the rank of committee-man in the Caucasus, beckoned to him.

“Go to the deuce!” said Kovaloff *sotto voce*. “Hi! coachman, drive me straight to the superintendent of police.” So saying, he got into a droshky and continued to shout all the time to the coachman “Drive hard!”

“Is the police superintendent at home?” he asked on entering the front hall.

“No, sir,” answered the porter, “he has just gone out.”

“Ah, just as I thought!”

“Yes,” continued the porter, “he has only just gone out; if you had been a moment earlier you would perhaps have caught him.”

Kovaloff, still holding his handkerchief to his face, re-entered the droshky and cried in a despairing voice “Drive on!”

“Where?” asked the coachman.

“Straight on!”

“But how? There are cross-roads here. Shall I go to the right or the left?”

This question made Kovaloff reflect. In his situation it was necessary to have recourse to the police; not because the affair had anything to do with them directly but because they acted more promptly than other authorities. As for demanding any explanation from the department to which the nose claimed to belong, it would, he felt, be useless, for the answers of that gentleman showed that he regarded nothing as sacred, and he might just as likely have lied in this matter as in saying that he had never seen Kovaloff.

But just as he was about to order the coachman to drive to the police-station, the idea occurred to him that this rascally scoundrel who, at their first meeting, had behaved so disloyally towards him, might, profiting by the delay, quit the city secretly; and then all his searching would be in vain, or might last over a whole month. Finally, as though visited with a heavenly inspiration, he resolved to go directly to an advertisement office, and to advertise the loss of his nose, giving all its distinctive characteristics in detail, so that anyone who found it might bring it at once to him, or at any rate inform him where it lived. Having decided on this course, he ordered the coachman to drive to the advertisement office, and all the way he continued to punch him in the back-“Quick, scoundrel! quick!”

“Yes, sir!” answered the coachman, lashing his shaggy horse with the reins.

At last they arrived, and Kovaloff, out of breath, rushed into a little room

where a grey-haired official, in an old coat and with spectacles on his nose, sat at a table holding his pen between his teeth, counting a heap of copper coins.

“Who takes in the advertisements here?” exclaimed Kovaloff.

“At your service, sir,” answered the grey-haired functionary, looking up and then fastening his eyes again on the heap of coins before him.

“I wish to place an advertisement in your paper-”

“Have the kindness to wait a minute,” answered the official, putting down figures on paper with one hand, and with the other moving two balls on his calculating-frame.

A lackey, whose silver-laced coat showed that he served in one of the houses of the nobility, was standing by the table with a note in his hand, and speaking in a lively tone, by way of showing himself sociable. “Would you believe it, sir, this little dog is really not worth twenty-four kopecks, and for my own part I would not give a farthing for it; but the countess is quite gone upon it, and offers a hundred roubles' reward to anyone who finds it. To tell you the truth, the tastes of these people are very different from ours; they don't mind giving five hundred or a thousand roubles for a poodle or a pointer, provided it be a good one.”

The official listened with a serious air while counting the number of letters contained in the note. At either side of the table stood a number of housekeepers, clerks and porters, carrying notes. The writer of one wished to sell a barouche, which had been brought from Paris in 1814 and had been very little used; others wanted to dispose of a strong droshky which wanted one spring, a spirited horse seventeen years old, and so on. The room where these people were collected was very small, and the air was very close; but Kovaloff was not affected by it, for he had covered his face with a handkerchief, and because his nose itself was heaven knew where.

“Sir, allow me to ask you-I am in a great hurry,” he said at last impatiently.

“In a moment! In a moment! Two roubles, twenty-four kopecks-one minute! One rouble, sixty-four kopecks!” said the grey-haired official, throwing their notes back to the housekeepers and porters. “What do you wish?” he said, turning to Kovaloff.

“I wish-” answered the latter, “I have just been swindled and cheated, and I cannot get hold of the perpetrator. I only want you to insert an advertisement to say that whoever brings this scoundrel to me will be well

rewarded.”

“What is your name, please?”

“Why do you want my name? I have many lady friends—Madame Tchektyriev, wife of a state-councillor, Madame Podtotchina, wife of a Colonel. Heaven forbid that they should get to hear of it. You can simply write ‘committee-man,’ or, better, ‘Major.’”

“And the man who has run away is your serf.”

“Serf! If he was, it would not be such a great swindle! It is the nose which has absconded.”

“H'm! What a strange name. And this Mr Nose has stolen from you a considerable sum?”

“Mr Nose! Ah, you don't understand me! It is my own nose which has gone, I don't know where. The devil has played a trick on me.”

“How has it disappeared? I don't understand.”

“I can't tell you how, but the important point is that now it walks about the city itself a state-councillor. That is why I want you to advertise that whoever gets hold of it should bring it as soon as possible to me. Consider; how can I live without such a prominent part of my body? It is not as if it were merely a little toe; I would only have to put my foot in my boot and no one would notice its absence. Every Thursday I call on the wife of M. Tchektyriev, the state-councillor; Madame Podtotchina, a Colonel's wife who has a very pretty daughter, is one of my acquaintances; and what am I to do now? I cannot appear before them like this.”

The official compressed his lips and reflected. “No, I cannot insert an advertisement like that,” he said after a long pause.

“What! Why not?”

“Because it might compromise the paper. Suppose everyone could advertise that his nose was lost. People already say that all sorts of nonsense and lies are inserted.”

“But this is not nonsense! There is nothing of that sort in my case.”

“You think so? Listen a minute. Last week there was a case very like it. An official came, just as you have done, bringing an advertisement for the insertion of which he paid two roubles, sixty-three kopecks; and this advertisement simply announced the loss of a black-haired poodle. There did not seem to be anything out of the way in it, but it was really a satire; by the poodle was meant the cashier of some establishment or other.”

“But I am not talking of a poodle, but my own nose; i.e. almost myself.”

“No, I cannot insert your advertisement.”

“But my nose really has disappeared!”

“That is a matter for a doctor. There are said to be people who can provide you with any kind of nose you like. But I see that you are a witty man, and like to have your little joke.”

“But I swear to you on my word of honour. Look at my face yourself.”

“Why put yourself out?” continued the official, taking a pinch of snuff. “All the same, if you don't mind,” he added with a touch of curiosity, “I should like to have a look at it.”

The committee-man removed the handkerchief from before his face.

“It certainly does look odd,” said the official. “It is perfectly flat like a freshly fried pancake. It is hardly credible.”

“Very well. Are you going to hesitate any more? You see it is impossible to refuse to advertise my loss. I shall be particularly obliged to you, and I shall be glad that this incident has procured me the pleasure of making your acquaintance.” The Major, we see, did not even shrink from a slight humiliation.

“It certainly is not difficult to advertise it,” replied the official; “but I don't see what good it would do you. However, if you lay so much stress on it, you should apply to someone who has a skilful pen, so that he may describe it as a curious, natural freak, and publish the article in the *Northern Bee*” (here he took another pinch) “for the benefit of youthful readers” (he wiped his nose), “or simply as a matter worthy of arousing public curiosity.”

The committee-man felt completely discouraged. He let his eyes fall absent-mindedly on a daily paper in which theatrical performances were advertised. Reading there the name of an actress whom he knew to be pretty, he involuntarily smiled, and his hand sought his pocket to see if he had a blue ticket-for in Kovaloff's opinion superior officers like himself should not take a lesser-priced seat; but the thought of his lost nose suddenly spoilt everything.

The official himself seemed touched at his difficult position. Desiring to console him, he tried to express his sympathy by a few polite words. “I much regret,” he said, “your extraordinary mishap. Will you not try a pinch of snuff? It clears the head, banishes depression, and is a good preventive against hæmorrhoids.”

So saying, he reached his snuff-box out to Kovaloff, skilfully concealing at the same time the cover, which was adorned with the portrait of some lady

or other.

This act, quite innocent in itself, exasperated Kovaloff. "I don't understand what you find to joke about in the matter," he exclaimed angrily. "Don't you see that I lack precisely the essential feature for taking snuff? The devil take your snuff-box. I don't want to look at snuff now, not even the best, certainly not your vile stuff!"

So saying, he left the advertisement office in a state of profound irritation, and went to the commissary of police. He arrived just as this dignitary was reclining on his couch, and saying to himself with a sigh of satisfaction, "Yes, I shall make a nice little sum out of that."

It might be expected, therefore, that the committee-man's visit would be quite inopportune.

This police commissary was a great patron of all the arts and industries; but what he liked above everything else was a cheque. "It is a thing," he used to say, "to which it is not easy to find an equivalent; it requires no food, it does not take up much room, it stays in one's pocket, and if it falls, it is not broken."

The commissary accorded Kovaloff a fairly frigid reception, saying that the afternoon was not the best time to come with a case, that nature required one to rest a little after eating (this showed the committee-man that the commissary was acquainted with the aphorisms of the ancient sages), and that respectable people did not have their noses stolen.

The last allusion was too direct. We must remember that Kovaloff was a very sensitive man. He did not mind anything said against him as an individual, but he could not endure any reflection on his rank or social position. He even believed that in comedies one might allow attacks on junior officers, but never on their seniors.

The commissary's reception of him hurt his feelings so much that he raised his head proudly, and said with dignity, "After such insulting expressions on your part, I have nothing more to say." And he left the place.

He reached his house quite wearied out. It was already growing dark. After all his fruitless search, his room seemed to him melancholy and even ugly. In the vestibule he saw his valet Ivan stretched on the leather couch and amusing himself by spitting at the ceiling, which he did very cleverly, hitting every time the same spot. His servant's equanimity enraged him; he struck him on the forehead with his hat, and said, "You good-for-nothing, you are always playing the fool!"

Ivan rose quickly and hastened to take off his master's cloak.

Once in his room, the Major, tired and depressed, threw himself in an armchair and, after sighing a while, began to soliloquise:

“In heaven's name, why should such a misfortune befall me? If I had lost an arm or a leg, it would be less insupportable; but a man without a nose! Devil take it!-what is he good for? He is only fit to be thrown out of the window. If it had been taken from me in war or in a duel, or if I had lost it by my own fault! But it has disappeared inexplicably. But no! it is impossible,” he continued after reflecting a few moments, “it is incredible that a nose can disappear like that-quite incredible. I must be dreaming, or suffering from some hallucination; perhaps I swallowed, by mistake instead of water, the brandy with which I rub my chin after being shaved. That fool of an Ivan must have forgotten to take it away, and I must have swallowed it.”

In order to find out whether he were really drunk, the Major pinched himself so hard that he unvoluntarily uttered a cry. The pain convinced him that he was quite wide awake. He walked slowly to the looking-glass and at first closed his eyes, hoping to see his nose suddenly in its proper place; but on opening them, he started back. “What a hideous sight!” he exclaimed.

It was really incomprehensible. One might easily lose a button, a silver spoon, a watch, or something similar; but a loss like this, and in one's own dwelling!

After considering all the circumstances, Major Kovaloff felt inclined to suppose that the cause of all his trouble should be laid at the door of Madame Podtochina, the Colonel's wife, who wished him to marry her daughter. He himself paid her court readily, but always avoided coming to the point. And when the lady one day told him point-blank that she wished him to marry her daughter, he gently drew back, declaring that he was still too young, and that he had to serve five years more before he would be forty-two. This must be the reason why the lady, in revenge, had resolved to bring him into disgrace, and had hired two sorceresses for that object. One thing was certain-his nose had not been cut off; no one had entered his room, and as for Ivan Jakovlevitch-he had been shaved by him on Wednesday, and during that day and the whole of Thursday his nose had been there, as he knew and well remembered. Moreover, if his nose had been cut off he would naturally have felt pain, and doubtless the wound would not have healed so quickly, nor would the surface have been as flat as a pancake.

All kinds of plans passed through his head: should he bring a legal action

against the wife of a superior officer, or should he go to her and charge her openly with her treachery?

His reflections were interrupted by a sudden light, which shone through all the chinks of the door, showing that Ivan had lit the wax-candles in the vestibule. Soon Ivan himself came in with the lights. Kovaloff quickly seized a handkerchief and covered the place where his nose had been the evening before, so that his blockhead of a servant might not gape with his mouth wide open when he saw his master's extraordinary appearance.

Scarcely had Ivan returned to the vestibule than a stranger's voice was heard there.

"Does Major Kovaloff live here?" it asked.

"Come in!" said the Major, rising rapidly and opening the door.

He saw a police official of pleasant appearance, with grey whiskers and fairly full cheeks-the same who at the commencement of this story was standing at the end of the Isaac Bridge. "You have lost your nose?" he asked.

"Exactly so."

"It has just been found."

"What-do you say?" stammered Major Kovaloff.

Joy had suddenly paralysed his tongue. He stared at the police commissary on whose cheeks and full lips fell the flickering light of the candle.

"How was it?" he asked at last.

"By a very singular chance. It has been arrested just as it was getting into a carriage for Riga. Its passport had been made out some time ago in the name of an official; and what is still more strange, I myself took it at first for a gentleman. Fortunately I had my glasses with me, and then I saw at once that it was a nose. I am shortsighted, you know, and as you stand before me I cannot distinguish your nose, your beard, or anything else. My mother-in-law can hardly see at all."

Kovaloff was beside himself with excitement. "Where is it? Where? I will hasten there at once."

"Don't put yourself out. Knowing that you need it, I have brought it with me. Another singular thing is that the principal culprit in the matter is a scoundrel of a barber living in the Ascension Avenue, who is now safely locked up. I had long suspected him of drunkenness and theft; only the day before yesterday he stole some buttons in a shop. Your nose is quite uninjured." So saying, the police commissary put his hand in his pocket and

brought out the nose wrapped up in paper.

“Yes, yes, that is it!” exclaimed Kovaloff. “Will you not stay and drink a cup of tea with me?”

“I should like to very much, but I cannot. I must go at once to the House of Correction. The cost of living is very high nowadays. My mother-in-law lives with me, and there are several children; the eldest is very hopeful and intelligent, but I have no means for their education.”

After the commissary's departure, Kovaloff remained for some time plunged in a kind of vague reverie, and did not recover full consciousness for several moments, so great was the effect of this unexpected good news. He placed the recovered nose carefully in the palm of his hand, and examined it again with the greatest attention.

“Yes, this is it!” he said to himself. “Here is the heat-boil on the left side, which came out yesterday.” And he nearly laughed aloud with delight.

But nothing is permanent in this world. Joy in the second moment of its arrival is already less keen than in the first, is still fainter in the third, and finishes by coalescing with our normal mental state, just as the circles which the fall of a pebble forms on the surface of water, gradually die away. Kovaloff began to meditate, and saw that his difficulties were not yet over; his nose had been recovered, but it had to be joined on again in its proper place.

And suppose it could not? As he put this question to himself, Kovaloff grew pale. With a feeling of indescribable dread, he rushed towards his dressing-table, and stood before the mirror in order that he might not place his nose crookedly. His hands trembled.

Very carefully he placed it where it had been before. Horror! It did not remain there. He held it to his mouth and warmed it a little with his breath, and then placed it there again; but it would not hold.

“Hold on, you stupid!” he said.

But the nose seemed to be made of wood, and fell back on the table with a strange noise, as though it had been a cork. The Major's face began to twitch feverishly. “Is it possible that it won't stick?” he asked himself, full of alarm. But however often he tried, all his efforts were in vain.

He called Ivan, and sent him to fetch the doctor who occupied the finest flat in the mansion. This doctor was a man of imposing appearance, who had magnificent black whiskers and a healthy wife. He ate fresh apples every morning, and cleaned his teeth with extreme care, using five different tooth-

brushes for three-quarters of an hour daily.

The doctor came immediately. After having asked the Major when this misfortune had happened, he raised his chin and gave him a fillip with his finger just where the nose had been, in such a way that the Major suddenly threw back his head and struck the wall with it. The doctor said that did not matter; then, making him turn his face to the right, he felt the vacant place and said "H'm!" then he made him turn it to the left and did the same; finally he again gave him a fillip with his finger, so that the Major started like a horse whose teeth are being examined. After this experiment, the doctor shook his head and said, "No, it cannot be done. Rather remain as you are, lest something worse happen. Certainly one could replace it at once, but I assure you the remedy would be worse than the disease."

"All very fine, but how am I to go on without a nose?" answered Kovaloff. "There is nothing worse than that. How can I show myself with such a villainous appearance? I go into good society, and this evening I am invited to two parties. I know several ladies, Madame Tchektyriev, the wife of a state-councillor, Madame Podtotchina-although after what she has done, I don't want to have anything to do with her except through the agency of the police. I beg you," continued Kovaloff in a supplicating tone, "find some way or other of replacing it; even if it is not quite firm, as long as it holds at all; I can keep it in place sometimes with my hand, whenever there is any risk. Besides, I do not even dance, so that it is not likely to be injured by any sudden movement. As to your fee, be in no anxiety about that; I can well afford it."

"Believe me," answered the doctor in a voice which was neither too high nor too low, but soft and almost magnetic, "I do not treat patients from love of gain. That would be contrary to my principles and to my art. It is true that I accept fees, but that is only not to hurt my patients' feelings by refusing them. I could certainly replace your nose, but I assure you on my word of honour, it would only make matters worse. Rather let Nature do her own work. Wash the place often with cold water, and I assure you that even without a nose, you will be just as well as if you had one. As to the nose itself, I advise you to have it preserved in a bottle of spirits, or, still better, of warm vinegar mixed with two spoonfuls of brandy, and then you can sell it at a good price. I would be willing to take it myself, provided you do not ask too much."

"No, no, I shall not sell it at any price. I would rather it were lost again."

"Excuse me," said the doctor, taking his leave. "I hoped to be useful to

you, but I can do nothing more; you are at any rate convinced of my goodwill." So saying, the doctor left the room with a dignified air.

Kovaloff did not even notice his departure. Absorbed in a profound reverie, he only saw the edge of his snow-white cuffs emerging from the sleeves of his black coat.

The next day he resolved, before bringing a formal action, to write to the Colonel's wife and see whether she would not return to him, without further dispute, that of which she had deprived him.

The letter ran as follows:

"To Madame Alexandra Podtotchina,

"I hardly understand your method of action. Be sure that by adopting such a course you will gain nothing, and will certainly not succeed in making me marry your daughter. Believe me, the story of my nose has become well known; it is you and no one else who have taken the principal part in it. Its unexpected separation from the place which it occupied, its flight and its appearances sometimes in the disguise of an official, sometimes in proper person, are nothing but the consequence of unholy spells employed by you or by persons who, like you, are addicted to such honourable pursuits. On my part, I wish to inform you, that if the above-mentioned nose is not restored to-day to its proper place, I shall be obliged to have recourse to legal procedure.

"For the rest, with all respect, I have the honour to be your humble servant,

"Platon Kovaloff."

The reply was not long in coming, and was as follows:

"Major Platon Kovaloff,-

"Your letter has profoundly astonished me. I must confess that I had not expected such unjust reproaches on your part. I assure you that the official of whom you speak has not been at my house, either disguised or in his proper person. It is true that Philippe Ivanovitch Potantchikoff has paid visits at my house, and though he has actually asked for my daughter's hand, and was a man of good breeding, respectable and intelligent, I never gave him any hope.

"Again, you say something about a nose. If you intend to imply by that that I wished to snub you, i.e. to meet you with a refusal, I am very astonished because, as you well know, I was quite of the opposite mind. If after this you wish to ask for my daughter's hand, I should be glad to gratify you, for such has also been the object of my most fervent desire, in the hope of the accomplishment of which, I remain, yours most sincerely,

“Alexandra Podtotchina.”

“No,” said Kovaloff, after having reperused the letter, “she is certainly not guilty. It is impossible. Such a letter could not be written by a criminal.” The committee-man was experienced in such matters, for he had been often officially deputed to conduct criminal investigations while in the Caucasus. “But then how and by what trick of fate has the thing happened?” he said to himself with a gesture of discouragement. “The devil must be at the bottom of it.”

Meanwhile the rumour of this extraordinary event had spread all over the city, and, as is generally the case, not without numerous additions. At that period there was a general disposition to believe in the miraculous; the public had recently been impressed by experiments in magnetism. The story of the floating chairs in Koniouchennaia Street was still quite recent, and there was nothing astonishing in hearing soon afterwards that Major Kovaloff's nose was to be seen walking every day at three o'clock on the Neffsky Avenue. The crowd of curious spectators which gathered there daily was enormous. On one occasion someone spread a report that the nose was in Junker's stores and immediately the place was besieged by such a crowd that the police had to interfere and establish order. A certain speculator with a grave, whiskered face, who sold cakes at a theatre door, had some strong wooden benches made which he placed before the window of the stores, and obligingly invited the public to stand on them and look in, at the modest charge of twenty-four kopecks. A veteran colonel, leaving his house earlier than usual expressly for the purpose, had the greatest difficulty in elbowing his way through the crowd, but to his great indignation he saw nothing in the store window but an ordinary flannel waistcoat and a coloured lithograph representing a young girl darning a stocking, while an elegant youth in a waistcoat with large lappels watched her from behind a tree. The picture had hung in the same place for more than ten years. The colonel went off, growling savagely to himself, “How can the fools let themselves be excited by such idiotic stories?”

Then another rumour got abroad, to the effect that the nose of Major Kovaloff was in the habit of walking not on the Neffsky Avenue but in the Tauris Gardens. Some students of the Academy of Surgery went there on purpose to see it. A high-born lady wrote to the keeper of the gardens asking him to show her children this rare phenomenon, and to give them some suitable instruction on the occasion.

All these incidents were eagerly collected by the town wits, who just then were very short of anecdotes adapted to amuse ladies. On the other hand, the minority of solid, sober people were very much displeased. One gentleman asserted with great indignation that he could not understand how in our enlightened age such absurdities could spread abroad, and he was astonished that the Government did not direct their attention to the matter. This gentleman evidently belonged to the category of those people who wish the Government to interfere in everything, even in their daily quarrels with their wives.

But here the course of events is again obscured by a veil.

III

Strange events happen in this world, events which are sometimes entirely improbable. The same nose which had masqueraded as a state-councillor, and caused so much sensation in the town, was found one morning in its proper place, i.e. between the cheeks of Major Kovaloff, as if nothing had happened.

This occurred on 7th April. On awaking, the Major looked by chance into a mirror and perceived a nose. He quickly put his hand to it; it was there beyond a doubt!

“Oh!” exclaimed Kovaloff. For sheer joy he was on the point of performing a dance barefooted across his room, but the entrance of Ivan prevented him. He told him to bring water, and after washing himself, he looked again in the glass. The nose was there! Then he dried his face with a towel and looked again. Yes, there was no mistake about it!

“Look here, Ivan, it seems to me that I have a heat-boil on my nose,” he said to his valet.

And he thought to himself at the same time, “That will be a nice business if Ivan says to me ‘No, sir, not only is there no boil, but your nose itself is not there!’”

But Ivan answered, “There is nothing, sir; I can see no boil on your nose.”

“Good! Good!” exclaimed the Major, and snapped his fingers with delight.

At this moment the barber, Ivan Jakovlevitch, put his head in at the door, but as timidly as a cat which has just been beaten for stealing lard.

“Tell me first, are your hands clean?” asked Kovaloff when he saw him.

“Yes, sir.”

“You lie.”

“I swear they are perfectly clean, sir.”

“Very well; then come here.”

Kovaloff seated himself. Jakovlevitch tied a napkin under his chin, and in the twinkling of an eye covered his beard and part of his cheeks with a copious creamy lather.

“There it is!” said the barber to himself, as he glanced at the nose. Then he bent his head a little and examined it from one side. “Yes, it actually is the nose-really, when one thinks-” he continued, pursuing his mental soliloquy and still looking at it. Then quite gently, with infinite precaution, he raised

two fingers in the air in order to take hold of it by the extremity, as he was accustomed to do.

“Now then, take care!” Kovaloff exclaimed.

Ivan Jakovlevitch let his arm fall and felt more embarrassed than he had ever done in his life. At last he began to pass the razor very lightly over the Major's chin, and although it was very difficult to shave him without using the olfactory organ as a point of support, he succeeded, however, by placing his wrinkled thumb against the Major's lower jaw and cheek, thus overcoming all obstacles and bringing his task to a safe conclusion.

When the barber had finished, Kovaloff hastened to dress himself, took a droshky, and drove straight to the confectioner's. As he entered it, he ordered a cup of chocolate. He then stepped straight to the mirror; the nose was there!

He returned joyfully, and regarded with a satirical expression two officers who were in the shop, one of whom possessed a nose not much larger than a waistcoat button.

After that he went to the office of the department where he had applied for the post of vice-governor of a province or Government bailiff. As he passed through the hall of reception, he cast a glance at the mirror; the nose was there! Then he went to pay a visit to another committee-man, a very sarcastic personage, to whom he was accustomed to say in answer to his raillery, “Yes, I know, you are the funniest fellow in St Petersburg.”

On the way he said to himself, “If the Major does not burst into laughter at the sight of me, that is a most certain sign that everything is in its accustomed place.”

But the Major said nothing. “Very good!” thought Kovaloff.

As he returned, he met Madame Podtochina with her daughter. He accosted them, and they responded very graciously. The conversation lasted a long time, during which he took more than one pinch of snuff, saying to himself, “No, you haven't caught me yet, coquettes that you are! And as to the daughter, I shan't marry her at all.”

After that, the Major resumed his walks on the Neffsky Avenue and his visits to the theatre as if nothing had happened. His nose also remained in its place as if it had never quitted it. From that time he was always to be seen smiling, in a good humour, and paying attentions to pretty girls.

IV

Such was the occurrence which took place in the northern capital of our vast empire. On considering the account carefully we see that there is a good deal which looks improbable about it. Not to speak of the strange disappearance of the nose, and its appearance in different places under the disguise of a councillor of state, how was it that Kovaloff did not understand that one cannot decently advertise for a lost nose? I do not mean to say that he would have had to pay too much for the advertisement-that is a mere trifle, and I am not one of those who attach too much importance to money; but to advertise in such a case is not proper nor befitting.

Another difficulty is-how was the nose found in the baked loaf, and how did Ivan Jakovlevitch himself-no, I don't understand it at all!

But the most incomprehensible thing of all is, how authors can choose such subjects for their stories. That really surpasses my understanding. In the first place, no advantage results from it for the country; and in the second place, no harm results either.

All the same, when one reflects well, there really is something in the matter. Whatever may be said to the contrary, such cases do occur-rarely, it is true, but now and then actually.

THE CLOAK

In the department of-, but it is better not to mention the department. The touchiest things in the world are departments, regiments, courts of justice, in a word, all branches of public service. Each individual nowadays thinks all society insulted in his person. Quite recently, a complaint was received from a district chief of police in which he plainly demonstrated that all the imperial institutions were going to the dogs, and that the Czar's sacred name was being taken in vain; and in proof he appended to the complaint a romance, in which the district chief of police is made to appear about once in every ten pages, and sometimes in a downright drunken condition. Therefore, in order to avoid all unpleasantness, it will be better to designate the department in question, as a certain department.

So, in a certain department there was a certain official-not a very notable one, it must be allowed-short of stature, somewhat pock-marked, red-haired, and mole-eyed, with a bald forehead, wrinkled cheeks, and a complexion of the kind known as sanguine. The St. Petersburg climate was responsible for this. As for his official rank-with us Russians the rank comes first-he was what is called a perpetual titular councillor, over which, as is well known, some writers make merry and crack their jokes, obeying the praiseworthy custom of attacking those who cannot bite back.

His family name was Bashmachkin. This name is evidently derived from bashmak (shoe); but, when, at what time, and in what manner, is not known. His father and grandfather, and all the Bashmachkins, always wore boots, which were resoled two or three times a year. His name was Akaky Akakiyevich. It may strike the reader as rather singular and far-fetched; but he may rest assured that it was by no means far-fetched, and that the circumstances were such that it would have been impossible to give him any other.

This was how it came about.

Akaky Akakiyevich was born, if my memory fails me not, in the evening on the 23rd of March. His mother, the wife of a Government official, and a very fine woman, made all due arrangements for having the child baptised. She was lying on the bed opposite the door; on her right stood the godfather, Ivan Ivanovich Eroshkin, a most estimable man, who served as the head clerk of the senate; and the godmother, Arina Semyonovna Bielobrinshkova, the

wife of an officer of the quarter, and a woman of rare virtues. They offered the mother her choice of three names, Mokiya, Sossiya, or that the child should be called after the martyr Khozdazat. "No," said the good woman, "all those names are poor." In order to please her, they opened the calendar at another place; three more names appeared, Triphily, Dula, and Varakhasy. "This is awful," said the old woman. "What names! I truly never heard the like. I might have put up with Varadat or Varukh, but not Triphily and Varakhasy!" They turned to another page and found Pavsikakhy and Vakhtisy. "Now I see," said the old woman, "that it is plainly fate. And since such is the case, it will be better to name him after his father. His father's name was Akaky, so let his son's name be Akaky too." In this manner he became Akaky Akakiyevich. They christened the child, whereat he wept, and made a grimace, as though he foresaw that he was to be a titular councillor.

In this manner did it all come about. We have mentioned it in order that the reader might see for himself that it was a case of necessity, and that it was utterly impossible to give him any other name.

When and how he entered the department, and who appointed him, no one could remember. However much the directors and chiefs of all kinds were changed, he was always to be seen in the same place, the same attitude, the same occupation-always the letter-copying clerk-so that it was afterwards affirmed that he had been born in uniform with a bald head. No respect was shown him in the department. The porter not only did not rise from his seat when he passed, but never even glanced at him, any more than if a fly had flown through the reception-room. His superiors treated him in coolly despotic fashion. Some insignificant assistant to the head clerk would thrust a paper under his nose without so much as saying, "Copy," or, "Here's an interesting little case," or anything else agreeable, as is customary amongst well-bred officials. And he took it, looking only at the paper, and not observing who handed it to him, or whether he had the right to do so; simply took it, and set about copying it.

The young officials laughed at and made fun of him, so far as their official wit permitted; told in his presence various stories concocted about him, and about his landlady, an old woman of seventy; declared that she beat him; asked when the wedding was to be; and strewed bits of paper over his head, calling them snow. But Akaky Akakiyevich answered not a word, any more than if there had been no one there besides himself. It even had no effect upon his work. Amid all these annoyances he never made a single

mistake in a letter. But if the joking became wholly unbearable, as when they jogged his head, and prevented his attending to his work, he would exclaim:

“Leave me alone! Why do you insult me?”

And there was something strange in the words and the voice in which they were uttered. There was in it something which moved to pity; so much so that one young man, a newcomer, who, taking pattern by the others, had permitted himself to make sport of Akaky, suddenly stopped short, as though all about him had undergone a transformation, and presented itself in a different aspect. Some unseen force repelled him from the comrades whose acquaintance he had made, on the supposition that they were decent, well-bred men. Long afterwards, in his gayest moments, there recurred to his mind the little official with the bald forehead, with his heart-rending words, “Leave me alone! Why do you insult me?” In these moving words, other words resounded—“I am thy brother.” And the young man covered his face with his hand; and many a time afterwards, in the course of his life, shuddered at seeing how much inhumanity there is in man, how much savage coarseness is concealed beneath refined, cultured, worldly refinement, and even, O God! in that man whom the world acknowledges as honourable and upright.

It would be difficult to find another man who lived so entirely for his duties. It is not enough to say that Akaky laboured with zeal; no, he laboured with love. In his copying, he found a varied and agreeable employment. Enjoyment was written on his face; some letters were even favourites with him; and when he encountered these, he smiled, winked, and worked with his lips, till it seemed as though each letter might be read in his face, as his pen traced it. If his pay had been in proportion to his zeal, he would, perhaps, to his great surprise, have been made even a councillor of state. But he worked, as his companions, the wits, put it, like a horse in a mill.

However, it would be untrue to say that no attention was paid to him. One director being a kindly man, and desirous of rewarding him for his long service, ordered him to be given something more important than mere copying. So he was ordered to make a report of an already concluded affair, to another department; the duty consisting simply in changing the heading and altering a few words from the first to the third person. This caused him so much toil, that he broke into a perspiration, rubbed his forehead, and finally said, “No, give me rather something to copy.” After that they let him copy on forever.

Outside this copying, it appeared that nothing existed for him. He gave no

thought to his clothes. His uniform was not green, but a sort of rusty-meal colour. The collar was low, so that his neck, in spite of the fact that it was not long, seemed inordinately so as it emerged from it, like the necks of the plaster cats which pedlars carry about on their heads. And something was always sticking to his uniform, either a bit of hay or some trifle. Moreover, he had a peculiar knack, as he walked along the street, of arriving beneath a window just as all sorts of rubbish was being flung out of it; hence he always bore about on his hat scraps of melon rinds, and other such articles. Never once in his life did he give heed to what was going on every day to the street; while it is well known that his young brother officials trained the range of their glances till they could see when any one's trouser-straps came undone upon the opposite sidewalk, which always brought a malicious smile to their faces. But Akaky Akakiyevich saw in all things the clean, even strokes of his written lines; and only when a horse thrust his nose, from some unknown quarter, over his shoulder, and sent a whole gust of wind down his neck from his nostrils, did he observe that he was not in the middle of a line, but in the middle of the street.

On reaching home, he sat down at once at the table, sipped his cabbage-soup up quickly, and swallowed a bit of beef with onions, never noticing their taste, and gulping down everything with flies and anything else which the Lord happened to send at the moment. When he saw that his stomach was beginning to swell, he rose from the table, and copied papers which he had brought home. If there happened to be none, he took copies for himself, for his own gratification, especially if the document was noteworthy, not on account of its style, but of its being addressed to some distinguished person.

Even at the hour when the grey St. Petersburg sky had quite disappeared, and all the official world had eaten or dined, each as he could, in accordance with the salary he received and his own fancy; when, all were resting from the department jar of pens, running to and fro, for their own and other people's indispensable occupations, and from all the work that an uneasy man makes willingly for himself, rather than what is necessary; when, officials hasten to dedicate to pleasure the time which is left to them, one bolder than the rest, going to the theatre; another; into the street looking under the bonnets; another, wasting his evening in compliments to some pretty girl, the star of a small official circle; another-and this is the common case of all-visiting his comrades on the third or fourth floor, in two small rooms with an ante-room or kitchen, and some pretensions to fashion, such as

a lamp or some other trifle which has cost many a sacrifice of dinner or pleasure trip; in a word, at the hour when all officials disperse among the contracted quarters of their friends, to play whist, as they sip their tea from glasses with a kopek's worth of sugar, smoke long pipes, relate at times some bits of gossip which a Russian man can never, under any circumstances, refrain from, and when there is nothing else to talk of, repeat eternal anecdotes about the commandant to whom they had sent word that the tails of the horses on the Falconet Monument had been cut off; when all strive to divert themselves, Akaky Akakiyevich indulged in no kind of diversion. No one could even say that he had seen him at any kind of evening party. Having written to his heart's content, he lay down to sleep, smiling at the thought of the coming day-of what God might send him to copy on the morrow.

Thus flowed on the peaceful life of the man, who, with a salary of four hundred rubles, understood how to be content with his lot; and thus it would have continued to flow on, perhaps, to extreme old age, were it not that there are various ills strewn along the path of life for titular councillors as well as for private, actual, court, and every other species of councillor, even to those who never give any advice or take any themselves.

There exists in St. Petersburg a powerful foe of all who receive a salary of four hundred rubles a year, or thereabouts. This foe is no other than the Northern cold, although it is said to be very healthy. At nine o'clock in the morning, at the very hour when the streets are filled with men bound for the various official departments, it begins to bestow such powerful and piercing nips on all noses impartially, that the poor officials really do not know what to do with them. At an hour, when the foreheads of even those who occupy exalted positions ache with the cold, and tears start to their eyes, the poor titular councillors are sometimes quite unprotected. Their only salvation lies in traversing as quickly as possible, in their thin little cloaks, five or six streets, and then warming their feet in the porter's room, and so thawing all their talents and qualifications for official service, which had become frozen on the way.

Akaky Akakiyevich had felt for some time that his back and shoulders were paining with peculiar poignancy, in spite of the fact that he tried to traverse the distance with all possible speed. He began finally to wonder whether the fault did not lie in his cloak. He examined it thoroughly at home, and discovered that in two places, namely, on the back and shoulders, it had become thin as gauze. The cloth was worn to such a degree that he could see

through it, and the lining had fallen into pieces. You must know that Akaky Akakiyevich's cloak served as an object of ridicule to the officials. They even refused it the noble name of cloak, and called it a cape. In fact, it was of singular make, its collar diminishing year by year to serve to patch its other parts. The patching did not exhibit great skill on the part of the tailor, and was, in fact, baggy and ugly. Seeing how the matter stood, Akaky Akakiyevich decided that it would be necessary to take the cloak to Petrovich, the tailor, who lived somewhere on the fourth floor up a dark staircase, and who, in spite of his having but one eye and pock-marks all over his face, busied himself with considerable success in repairing the trousers and coats of officials and others; that is to say, when he was sober and not nursing some other scheme in his head.

It is not necessary to say much about this tailor, but as it is the custom to have the character of each personage in a novel clearly defined there is no help for it, so here is Petrovich the tailor. At first he was called only Grigory, and was some gentleman's serf. He commenced calling himself Petrovich from the time when he received his free papers, and further began to drink heavily on all holidays, at first on the great ones, and then on all church festivals without discrimination, wherever a cross stood in the calendar. On this point he was faithful to ancestral custom; and when quarrelling with his wife, he called her a low female and a German. As we have mentioned his wife, it will be necessary to say a word or two about her. Unfortunately, little is known of her beyond the fact that Petrovich had a wife, who wore a cap and a dress, but could not lay claim to beauty, at least, no one but the soldiers of the guard even looked under her cap when they met her.

Ascending the staircase which led to Petrovich's room-which staircase was all soaked with dish-water and reeked with the smell of spirits which affects the eyes, and is an inevitable adjunct to all dark stairways in St. Petersburg houses-ascending the stairs, Akaky Akakiyevich pondered how much Petrovich would ask, and mentally resolved not to give more than two rubles. The door was open, for the mistress, in cooking some fish, had raised such a smoke in the kitchen that not even the beetles were visible. Akaky Akakiyevich passed through the kitchen unperceived, even by the housewife, and at length reached a room where he beheld Petrovich seated on a large unpainted table, with his legs tucked under him like a Turkish pasha. His feet were bare, after the fashion of tailors as they sit at work; and the first thing which caught the eye was his thumb, with a deformed nail thick and strong as

a turtle's shell. About Petrovich's neck hung a skein of silk and thread, and upon his knees lay some old garment. He had been trying unsuccessfully for three minutes to thread his needle, and was enraged at the darkness and even at the thread, growling in a low voice, "It won't go through, the barbarian! you pricked me, you rascal!"

Akaky Akakiyevich was vexed at arriving at the precise moment when Petrovich was angry. He liked to order something of Petrovich when he was a little downhearted, or, as his wife expressed it, "when he had settled himself with brandy, the one-eyed devil!" Under such circumstances Petrovich generally came down in his price very readily, and even bowed and returned thanks. Afterwards, to be sure, his wife would come, complaining that her husband had been drunk, and so had fixed the price too low; but, if only a ten-kopek piece were added then the matter would be settled. But now it appeared that Petrovich was in a sober condition, and therefore rough, taciturn, and inclined to demand, Satan only knows what price. Akaky Akakiyevich felt this, and would gladly have beat a retreat, but he was in for it. Petrovich screwed up his one eye very intently at him, and Akaky Akakiyevich involuntarily said, "How do you do, Petrovich?"

"I wish you a good morning, sir," said Petrovich squinting at Akaky Akakiyevich's hands, to see what sort of booty he had brought.

"Ah! I-to you, Petrovich, this-" It must be known that Akaky Akakiyevich expressed himself chiefly by prepositions, adverbs, and scraps of phrases which had no meaning whatever. If the matter was a very difficult one, he had a habit of never completing his sentences, so that frequently, having begun a phrase with the words, "This, in fact, is quite-" he forgot to go on, thinking he had already finished it.

"What is it?" asked Petrovich, and with his one eye scanned Akaky Akakiyevich's whole uniform from the collar down to the cuffs, the back, the tails and the button-holes, all of which were well known to him, since they were his own handiwork. Such is the habit of tailors; it is the first thing they do on meeting one.

"But I, here, this-Petrovich-a cloak, cloth-here you see, everywhere, in different places, it is quite strong-it is a little dusty and looks old, but it is new, only here in one place it is a little-on the back, and here on one of the shoulders, it is a little worn, yes, here on this shoulder it is a little-do you see? That is all. And a little work-"

Petrovich took the cloak, spread it out, to begin with, on the table, looked

at it hard, shook his head, reached out his hand to the window-sill for his snuff-box, adorned with the portrait of some general, though what general is unknown, for the place where the face should have been had been rubbed through by the finger and a square bit of paper had been pasted over it. Having taken a pinch of snuff, Petrovich held up the cloak, and inspected it against the light, and again shook his head. Then he turned it, lining upwards, and shook his head once more. After which he again lifted the general-adorned lid with its bit of pasted paper, and having stuffed his nose with snuff, dosed and put away the snuff-box, and said finally, "No, it is impossible to mend it. It is a wretched garment!"

Akaky Akakiyevich's heart sank at these words.

"Why is it impossible, Petrovich?" he said, almost in the pleading voice of a child. "All that ails it is, that it is worn on the shoulders. You must have some pieces--"

"Yes, patches could be found, patches are easily found," said Petrovich, "but there's nothing to sew them to. The thing is completely rotten. If you put a needle to it-see, it will give way."

"Let it give way, and you can put on another patch at once."

"But there is nothing to put the patches on to. There's no use in strengthening it. It is too far gone. It's lucky that it's cloth, for, if the wind were to blow, it would fly away."

"Well, strengthen it again. How this, in fact--"

"No," said Petrovich decisively, "there is nothing to be done with it. It's a thoroughly bad job. You'd better, when the cold winter weather comes on, make yourself some gaiters out of it, because stockings are not warm. The Germans invented them in order to make more money." Petrovich loved on all occasions to have a fling at the Germans. "But it is plain you must have a new cloak."

At the word "new" all grew dark before Akaky Akakiyevich's eyes, and everything in the room began to whirl round. The only thing he saw clearly was the general with the paper face on the lid of Petrovich's snuff-box. "A new one?" said he, as if still in a dream. "Why, I have no money for that."

"Yes, a new one," said Petrovich, with barbarous composure.

"Well, if it came to a new one, how-it--"

"You mean how much would it cost?"

"Yes."

"Well, you would have to lay out a hundred and fifty or more," said

Petrovich, and pursed up his lips significantly. He liked to produce powerful effects, liked to stun utterly and suddenly, and then to glance sideways to see what face the stunned person would put on the matter.

“A hundred and fifty rubles for a cloak!” shrieked poor Akaky Akakiyevich, perhaps for the first time in his life, for his voice had always been distinguished for softness.

“Yes, sir,” said Petrovich, “for any kind of cloak. If you have a marten fur on the collar, or a silk-lined hood, it will mount up to two hundred.”

“Petrovich, please,” said Akaky Akakiyevich in a beseeching tone, not hearing, and not trying to hear, Petrovich’s words, and disregarding all his “effects,” “some repairs, in order that it may wear yet a little longer.”

“No, it would only be a waste of time and money,” said Petrovich. And Akaky Akakiyevich went away after these words, utterly discouraged. But Petrovich stood for some time after his departure, with significantly compressed lips, and without betaking himself to his work, satisfied that he would not be dropped, and an artistic tailor employed.

Akaky Akakiyevich went out into the street as if in a dream. “Such an affair!” he said to himself. “I did not think it had come to-” and then after a pause, he added, “Well, so it is! see what it has come to at last! and I never imagined that it was so!” Then followed a long silence, after which he exclaimed, “Well, so it is! see what already-nothing unexpected that-it would be nothing-what a strange circumstance!” So saying, instead of going home, he went in exactly the opposite direction without suspecting it. On the way, a chimney-sweep bumped up against him, and blackened his shoulder, and a whole hatful of rubbish landed on him from the top of a house which was building. He did not notice it, and only when he ran against a watchman, who, having planted his halberd beside him, was shaking some snuff from his box into his horny hand, did he recover himself a little, and that because the watchman said, “Why are you poking yourself into a man’s very face? Haven’t you the pavement?” This caused him to look about him, and turn towards home.

There only, he finally began to collect his thoughts, and to survey his position in its clear and actual light, and to argue with himself, sensibly and frankly, as with a reasonable friend, with whom one can discuss private and personal matters. “No,” said Akaky Akakiyevich, “it is impossible to reason with Petrovich now. He is that-evidently, his wife has been beating him. I’d better go to him on Sunday morning. After Saturday night he will be a little

cross-eyed and sleepy, for he will want to get drunk, and his wife won't give him any money, and at such a time, a ten-kopek piece in his hand will-he will become more fit to reason with, and then the cloak and that-" Thus argued Akaky Akakiyevich with himself regained his courage, and waited until the first Sunday, when, seeing from afar that Petrovich's wife had left the house, he went straight to him.

Petrovich's eye was indeed very much askew after Saturday. His head drooped, and he was very sleepy; but for all that, as soon as he knew what it was a question of, it seemed as though Satan jogged his memory. "Impossible," said he. "Please to order a new one." Thereupon Akaky Akakiyevich handed over the ten-kopek piece. "Thank you, sir. I will drink your good health," said Petrovich. "But as for the cloak, don't trouble yourself about it; it is good for nothing. I will make you a capital new one, so let us settle about it now."

Akaky Akakiyevich was still for mending it, but Petrovich would not hear of it, and said, "I shall certainly have to make you a new one, and you may depend upon it that I shall do my best. It may even be, as the fashion goes, that the collar can be fastened by silver hooks under a flap."

Then Akaky Akakiyevich saw that it was impossible to get along without a new cloak, and his spirit sank utterly. How, in fact, was it to be done? Where was the money to come from? He must have some new trousers, and pay a debt of long standing to the shoemaker for putting new tops to his old boots, and he must order three shirts from the seamstress, and a couple of pieces of linen. In short, all his money must be spent. And even if the director should be so kind as to order him to receive forty-five or even fifty rubles instead of forty, it would be a mere nothing, a mere drop in the ocean towards the funds necessary for a cloak, although he knew that Petrovich was often wrong-headed enough to blurt out some outrageous price, so that even his own wife could not refrain from exclaiming, "Have you lost your senses, you fool?" At one time he would not work at any price, and now it was quite likely that he had named a higher sum than the cloak would cost.

But although he knew that Petrovich would undertake to make a cloak for eighty rubles, still, where was he to get the eighty rubles from? He might possibly manage half. Yes, half might be procured, but where was the other half to come from? But the reader must first be told where the first half came from.

Akaky Akakiyevich had a habit of putting, for every ruble he spent, a

groschen into a small box, fastened with lock and key, and with a slit in the top for the reception of money. At the end of every half-year he counted over the heap of coppers, and changed it for silver. This he had done for a long time, and in the course of years, the sum had mounted up to over forty rubles. Thus he had one half on hand. But where was he to find the other half? Where was he to get another forty rubles from? Akaky Akakiyevich thought and thought, and decided that it would be necessary to curtail his ordinary expenses, for the space of one year at least, to dispense with tea in the evening, to burn no candles, and, if there was anything which he must do, to go into his landlady's room, and work by her light. When he went into the street, he must walk as lightly as he could, and as cautiously, upon the stones, almost upon tiptoe, in order not to wear his heels down in too short a time. He must give the laundress as little to wash as possible; and, in order not to wear out his clothes, he must take them off as soon as he got home, and wear only his cotton dressing-gown, which had been long and carefully saved.

To tell the truth, it was a little hard for him at first to accustom himself to these deprivations. But he got used to them at length, after a fashion, and all went smoothly. He even got used to being hungry in the evening, but he made up for it by treating himself, so to say, in spirit, by bearing ever in mind the idea of his future cloak. From that time forth, his existence seemed to become, in some way, fuller, as if he were married, or as if some other man lived in him, as if, in fact, he were not alone, and some pleasant friend had consented to travel along life's path with him, the friend being no other than the cloak, with thick wadding and a strong lining incapable of wearing out. He became more lively, and even his character grew firmer, like that of a man who has made up his mind, and set himself a goal. From his face and gait, doubt and indecision, all hesitating and wavering disappeared of themselves. Fire gleamed in his eyes, and occasionally the boldest and most daring ideas flitted through his mind. Why not, for instance, have marten fur on the collar? The thought of this almost made him absent-minded. Once, in copying a letter, he nearly made a mistake, so that he exclaimed almost aloud, "Ugh!" and crossed himself. Once, in the course of every month, he had a conference with Petrovich on the subject of the cloak, where it would be better to buy the cloth, and the colour, and the price. He always returned home satisfied, though troubled, reflecting that the time would come at last when it could all be bought, and then the cloak made.

The affair progressed more briskly than he had expected. For beyond all

his hopes, the director awarded neither forty nor forty-five rubles for Akaky Akakiyevich's share, but sixty. Whether he suspected that Akaky Akakiyevich needed a cloak, or whether it was merely chance, at all events, twenty extra rubles were by this means provided. This circumstance hastened matters. Two or three months more of hunger and Akaky Akakiyevich had accumulated about eighty rubles. His heart, generally so quiet, began to throb. On the first possible day, he went shopping in company with Petrovich. They bought some very good cloth, and at a reasonable rate too, for they had been considering the matter for six months, and rarely let a month pass without their visiting the shops to enquire prices. Petrovich himself said that no better cloth could be had. For lining, they selected a cotton stuff, but so firm and thick, that Petrovich declared it to be better than silk, and even prettier and more glossy. They did not buy the marten fur, because it was, in fact, dear, but in its stead, they picked out the very best of cat-skin which could be found in the shop, and which might, indeed, be taken for marten at a distance.

Petrovich worked at the cloak two whole weeks, for there was a great deal of quilting; otherwise it would have been finished sooner. He charged twelve rubles for the job, it could not possibly have been done for less. It was all sewed with silk, in small, double seams, and Petrovich went over each seam afterwards with his own teeth, stamping in various patterns.

It was-it is difficult to say precisely on what day, but probably the most glorious one in Akaky Akakiyevich's life, when Petrovich at length brought home the cloak. He brought it in the morning, before the hour when it was necessary to start for the department. Never did a cloak arrive so exactly in the nick of time, for the severe cold had set in, and it seemed to threaten to increase. Petrovich brought the cloak himself as befits a good tailor. On his countenance was a significant expression, such as Akaky Akakiyevich had never beheld there. He seemed fully sensible that he had done no small deed, and crossed a gulf separating tailors who put in linings, and execute repairs, from those who make new things. He took the cloak out of the pocket-handkerchief in which he had brought it. The handkerchief was fresh from the laundress, and he put it in his pocket for use. Taking out the cloak, he gazed proudly at it, held it up with both hands, and flung it skilfully over the shoulders of Akaky Akakiyevich. Then he pulled it and fitted it down behind with his hand, and he draped it around Akaky Akakiyevich without buttoning it. Akaky Akakiyevich, like an experienced man, wished to try the sleeves.

Petrovich helped him on with them, and it turned out that the sleeves were satisfactory also. In short, the cloak appeared to be perfect, and most seasonable. Petrovich did not neglect to observe that it was only because he lived in a narrow street, and had no signboard, and had known Akaky Akakiyevich so long, that he had made it so cheaply; but that if he had been in business on the Nevsky Prospect, he would have charged seventy-five rubles for the making alone. Akaky Akakiyevich did not care to argue this point with Petrovich. He paid him, thanked him, and set out at once in his new cloak for the department. Petrovich followed him, and pausing in the street, gazed long at the cloak in the distance, after which he went to one side expressly to run through a crooked alley, and emerge again into the street beyond to gaze once more upon the cloak from another point, namely, directly in front.

Meantime Akaky Akakiyevich went on in holiday mood. He was conscious every second of the time that he had a new cloak on his shoulders, and several times he laughed with internal satisfaction. In fact, there were two advantages, one was its warmth, the other its beauty. He saw nothing of the road, but suddenly found himself at the department. He took off his cloak in the ante-room, looked it over carefully, and confided it to the special care of the attendant. It is impossible to say precisely how it was that every one in the department knew at once that Akaky Akakiyevich had a new cloak, and that the “cape” no longer existed. All rushed at the same moment into the ante-room to inspect it. They congratulated him, and said pleasant things to him, so that he began at first to smile, and then to grow ashamed. When all surrounded him, and said that the new cloak must be “christened,” and that he must at least give them all a party, Akaky Akakiyevich lost his head completely, and did not know where he stood, what to answer, or how to get out of it. He stood blushing all over for several minutes, trying to assure them with great simplicity that it was not a new cloak, that it was in fact the old “cape.”

At length one of the officials, assistant to the head clerk, in order to show that he was not at all proud, and on good terms with his inferiors, said:

“So be it, only I will give the party instead of Akaky Akakiyevich; I invite you all to tea with me to-night. It just happens to be my name-day too.”

The officials naturally at once offered the assistant clerk their congratulations, and accepted the invitation with pleasure. Akaky Akakiyevich would have declined; but all declared that it was discourteous,

that it was simply a sin and a shame, and that he could not possibly refuse. Besides, the notion became pleasant to him when he recollected that he should thereby have a chance of wearing his new cloak in the evening also.

That whole day was truly a most triumphant festival for Akaky Akakiyevich. He returned home in the most happy frame of mind, took off his cloak, and hung it carefully on the wall, admiring afresh the cloth and the lining. Then he brought out his old, worn-out cloak, for comparison. He looked at it, and laughed, so vast was the difference. And long after dinner he laughed again when the condition of the “cape” recurred to his mind. He dined cheerfully, and after dinner wrote nothing, but took his ease for a while on the bed, until it got dark. Then he dressed himself leisurely, put on his cloak, and stepped out into the street.

Where the host lived, unfortunately we cannot say. Our memory begins to fail us badly. The houses and streets in St. Petersburg have become so mixed up in our head that it is very difficult to get anything out of it again in proper form. This much is certain, that the official lived in the best part of the city; and therefore it must have been anything but near to Akaky Akakiyevich’s residence. Akaky Akakiyevich was first obliged to traverse a kind of wilderness of deserted, dimly-lighted streets. But in proportion as he approached the official’s quarter of the city, the streets became more lively, more populous, and more brilliantly illuminated. Pedestrians began to appear; handsomely dressed ladies were more frequently encountered; the men had otter skin collars to their coats; shabby sleigh-men with their wooden, railed sledges stuck over with brass-headed nails, became rarer; whilst on the other hand, more and more drivers in red velvet caps, lacquered sledges and bear-skin coats began to appear, and carriages with rich hammer-cloths flew swiftly through the streets, their wheels scrunching the snow.

Akaky Akakiyevich gazed upon all this as upon a novel sight. He had not been in the streets during the evening for years. He halted out of curiosity before a shop-window, to look at a picture representing a handsome woman, who had thrown off her shoe, thereby baring her whole foot in a very pretty way; whilst behind her the head of a man with whiskers and a handsome moustache peeped through the doorway of another room. Akaky Akakiyevich shook his head, and laughed, and then went on his way. Why did he laugh? Either because he had met with a thing utterly unknown, but for which every one cherishes, nevertheless, some sort of feeling, or else he thought, like many officials, “Well, those French! What is to be said? If they do go in for

anything of that sort, why-" But possibly he did not think at all.

Akaky Akakiyevich at length reached the house in which the head clerk's assistant lodged. He lived in fine style. The staircase was lit by a lamp, his apartment being on the second floor. On entering the vestibule, Akaky Akakiyevich beheld a whole row of goloshes on the floor. Among them, in the centre of the room, stood a samovar, humming and emitting clouds of steam. On the walls hung all sorts of coats and cloaks, among which there were even some with beaver collars, or velvet facings. Beyond, the buzz of conversation was audible, and became clear and loud, when the servant came out with a trayful of empty glasses, cream-jugs and sugar-bowls. It was evident that the officials had arrived long before, and had already finished their first glass of tea.

Akaky Akakiyevich, having hung up his own cloak, entered the inner room. Before him all at once appeared lights, officials, pipes, and card-tables, and he was bewildered by a sound of rapid conversation rising from all the tables, and the noise of moving chairs. He halted very awkwardly in the middle of the room, wondering what he ought to do. But they had seen him. They received him with a shout, and all thronged at once into the ante-room, and there took another look at his cloak. Akaky Akakiyevich, although somewhat confused, was frank-hearted, and could not refrain from rejoicing when he saw how they praised his cloak. Then, of course, they all dropped him and his cloak, and returned, as was proper, to the tables set out for whist.

All this, the noise, the talk, and the throng of people, was rather overwhelming to Akaky Akakiyevich. He simply did not know where he stood, or where to put his hands, his feet, and his whole body. Finally he sat down by the players, looked at the cards, gazed at the face of one and another, and after a while began to gape, and to feel that it was wearisome, the more so, as the hour was already long past when he usually went to bed. He wanted to take leave of the host, but they would not let him go, saying that he must not fail to drink a glass of champagne, in honour of his new garment. In the course of an hour, supper, consisting of vegetable salad, cold veal, pastry, confectioner's pies, and champagne, was served. They made Akaky Akakiyevich drink two glasses of champagne, after which he felt things grow livelier.

Still, he could not forget that it was twelve o'clock, and that he should have been at home long ago. In order that the host might not think of some excuse for detaining him, he stole out of the room quickly, sought out, in the

ante-room, his cloak, which, to his sorrow, he found lying on the floor, brushed it, picked off every speck upon it, put it on his shoulders, and descended the stairs to the street.

In the street all was still bright. Some petty shops, those permanent clubs of servants and all sorts of folks, were open. Others were shut, but, nevertheless, showed a streak of light the whole length of the door-crack, indicating that they were not yet free of company, and that probably some domestics, male and female, were finishing their stories and conversations, whilst leaving their masters in complete ignorance as to their whereabouts. Akaky Akakiyevich went on in a happy frame of mind. He even started to run, without knowing why, after some lady, who flew past like a flash of lightning. But he stopped short, and went on very quietly as before, wondering why he had quickened his pace. Soon there spread before him these deserted streets which are not cheerful in the daytime, to say nothing of the evening. Now they were even more dim and lonely. The lanterns began to grow rarer, oil, evidently, had been less liberally supplied. Then came wooden houses and fences. Not a soul anywhere; only the snow sparkled in the streets, and mournfully veiled the low-roofed cabins with their closed shutters. He approached the spot where the street crossed a vast square with houses barely visible on its farther side, a square which seemed a fearful desert.

Afar, a tiny spark glimmered from some watchman's-box, which seemed to stand on the edge of the world. Akaky Akakiyevich's cheerfulness diminished at this point in a marked degree. He entered the square, not without an involuntary sensation of fear, as though his heart warned him of some evil. He glanced back, and on both sides it was like a sea about him. "No, it is better not to look," he thought, and went on, closing his eyes. When he opened them, to see whether he was near the end of the square, he suddenly beheld, standing just before his very nose, some bearded individuals of precisely what sort, he could not make out. All grew dark before his eyes, and his heart throbbed.

"Of course, the cloak is mine!" said one of them in a loud voice, seizing hold of his collar. Akaky Akakiyevich was about to shout "Help!" when the second man thrust a fist, about the size of an official's head, at his very mouth, muttering, "Just you dare to scream!"

Akaky Akakiyevich felt them strip off his cloak, and give him a kick. He fell headlong upon the snow, and felt no more.

In a few minutes he recovered consciousness, and rose to his feet, but no one was there. He felt that it was cold in the square, and that his cloak was gone. He began to shout, but his voice did not appear to reach the outskirts of the square. In despair, but without ceasing to shout, he started at a run across the square, straight towards the watch-box, beside which stood the watchman, leaning on his halberd, and apparently curious to know what kind of a customer was running towards him shouting. Akaky Akakiyevich ran up to him, and began in a sobbing voice to shout that he was asleep, and attended to nothing, and did not see when a man was robbed. The watchman replied that he had seen two men stop him in the middle of the square, but supposed that they were friends of his, and that, instead of scolding vainly, he had better go to the police on the morrow, so that they might make a search for whoever had stolen the cloak.

Akaky Akakiyevich ran home and arrived in a state of complete disorder, his hair which grew very thinly upon his temples and the back of his head all tousled, his body, arms and legs, covered with snow. The old woman, who was mistress of his lodgings, on hearing a terrible knocking, sprang hastily from her bed, and, with only one shoe on, ran to open the door, pressing the sleeve of her chemise to her bosom out of modesty. But when she had opened it, she fell back on beholding Akaky Akakiyevich in such a condition. When he told her about the affair, she clasped her hands, and said that he must go straight to the district chief of police, for his subordinate would turn up his nose, promise well, and drop the matter there. The very best thing to do, therefore, would be to go to the district chief, whom she knew, because Finnish Anna, her former cook, was now nurse at his house. She often saw him passing the house, and he was at church every Sunday, praying, but at the same time gazing cheerfully at everybody; so that he must be a good man, judging from all appearances. Having listened to this opinion, Akaky Akakiyevich betook himself sadly to his room. And how he spent the night there, any one who can put himself in another's place may readily imagine.

Early in the morning, he presented himself at the district chief's, but was told the official was asleep. He went again at ten and was again informed that he was asleep. At eleven, and they said, "The superintendent is not at home." At dinner time, and the clerks in the ante-room would not admit him on any terms, and insisted upon knowing his business. So that at last, for once in his life, Akaky Akakiyevich felt an inclination to show some spirit, and said curtly that he must see the chief in person, that they ought not to presume to

refuse him entrance, that he came from the department of justice, and that when he complained of them, they would see.

The clerks dared make no reply to this, and one of them went to call the chief, who listened to the strange story of the theft of the coat. Instead of directing his attention to the principal points of the matter, he began to question Akaky Akakiyevich. Why was he going home so late? Was he in the habit of doing so, or had he been to some disorderly house? So that Akaky Akakiyevich got thoroughly confused, and left him, without knowing whether the affair of his cloak was in proper train or not.

All that day, for the first time in his life, he never went near the department. The next day he made his appearance, very pale, and in his old cape, which had become even more shabby. The news of the robbery of the cloak touched many, although there were some officials present who never lost an opportunity, even such a one as the present, of ridiculing Akaky Akakiyevich. They decided to make a collection for him on the spot, but the officials had already spent a great deal in subscribing for the director's portrait, and for some book, at the suggestion of the head of that division, who was a friend of the author; and so the sum was trifling.

One of them, moved by pity, resolved to help Akaky Akakiyevich with some good advice, at least, and told him that he ought not to go to the police, for although it might happen that a police-officer, wishing to win the approval of his superiors, might hunt up the cloak by some means, still, his cloak would remain in the possession of the police if he did not offer legal proof that it belonged to him. The best thing for him, therefore, would be to apply to a certain prominent personage; since this prominent personage, by entering into relation with the proper persons, could greatly expedite the matter.

As there was nothing else to be done, Akaky Akakiyevich decided to go to the prominent personage. What was the exact official position of the prominent personage, remains unknown to this day. The reader must know that the prominent personage had but recently become a prominent personage, having up to that time been only an insignificant person. Moreover, his present position was not considered prominent in comparison with others still more so. But there is always a circle of people to whom what is insignificant in the eyes of others, is important enough. Moreover, he strove to increase his importance by sundry devices. For instance, he managed to have the inferior officials meet him on the staircase when he

entered upon his service; no one was to presume to come directly to him, but the strictest etiquette must be observed; the collegiate recorder must make a report to the government secretary, the government secretary to the titular councillor, or whatever other man was proper, and all business must come before him in this manner. In Holy Russia, all is thus contaminated with the love of imitation; every man imitates and copies his superior. They even say that a certain titular councillor, when promoted to the head of some small separate office, immediately partitioned off a private room for himself, called it the audience chamber, and posted at the door a lackey with red collar and braid, who grasped the handle of the door, and opened to all comers, though the audience chamber would hardly hold an ordinary writing table.

The manners and customs of the prominent personage were grand and imposing, but rather exaggerated. The main foundation of his system was strictness. "Strictness, strictness, and always strictness!" he generally said; and at the last word he looked significantly into the face of the person to whom he spoke. But there was no necessity for this, for the halfscore of subordinates, who formed the entire force of the office, were properly afraid. On catching sight of him afar off, they left their work, and waited, drawn up in line, until he had passed through the room. His ordinary converse with his inferiors smacked of sternness, and consisted chiefly of three phrases: "How dare you?" "Do you know whom you are speaking to?" "Do you realise who is standing before you?"

Otherwise he was a very kind-hearted man, good to his comrades, and ready to oblige. But the rank of general threw him completely off his balance. On receiving any one of that rank, he became confused, lost his way, as it were, and never knew what to do. If he chanced to be amongst his equals, he was still a very nice kind of man, a very good fellow in many respects, and not stupid, but the very moment that he found himself in the society of people but one rank lower than himself, he became silent. And his situation aroused sympathy, the more so, as he felt himself that he might have been making an incomparably better use of his time. In his eyes, there was sometimes visible a desire to join some interesting conversation or group, but he was kept back by the thought, "Would it not be a very great condescension on his part? Would it not be familiar? And would he not thereby lose his importance?" And in consequence of such reflections, he always remained in the same dumb state, uttering from time to time a few monosyllabic sounds, and thereby earning the name of the most wearisome of men.

To this prominent personage Akaky Akakiyevich presented himself, and this at the most unfavourable time for himself, though opportune for the prominent personage. The prominent personage was in his cabinet, conversing very gaily with an old acquaintance and companion of his childhood, whom he had not seen for several years, and who had just arrived, when it was announced to him that a person named Bashmachkin had come. He asked abruptly, "Who is he?"—"Some official," he was informed. "Ah, he can wait! This is no time for him to call," said the important man.

It must be remarked here that the important man lied outrageously. He had said all he had to say to his friend long before, and the conversation had been interspersed for some time with very long pauses, during which they merely slapped each other on the leg, and said, "You think so, Ivan Abramovich!" "Just so, Stepan Varlamovich!" Nevertheless, he ordered that the official should be kept waiting, in order to show his friend, a man who had not been in the service for a long time, but had lived at home in the country, how long officials had to wait in his ante-room.

At length, having talked himself completely out, and more than that, having had his fill of pauses, and smoked a cigar in a very comfortable arm-chair with reclining back, he suddenly seemed to recollect, and said to the secretary, who stood by the door with papers of reports, "So it seems that there is an official waiting to see me. Tell him that he may come in." On perceiving Akaky Akakiyevich's modest mien and his worn uniform, he turned abruptly to him, and said, "What do you want?" in a curt hard voice, which he had practised in his room in private, and before the looking-glass, for a whole week before being raised to his present rank.

Akaky Akakiyevich, who was already imbued with a due amount of fear, became somewhat confused, and as well as his tongue would permit, explained, with a rather more frequent addition than usual of the word "that" that his cloak was quite new, and had been stolen in the most inhuman manner; that he had applied to him, in order that he might, in some way, by his intermediation—that he might enter into correspondence with the chief of police, and find the cloak.

For some inexplicable reason, this conduct seemed familiar to the prominent personage.

"What, my dear sir!" he said abruptly, "are you not acquainted with etiquette? To whom have you come? Don't you know how such matters are managed? You should first have presented a petition to the office. It would

have gone to the head of the department, then to the chief of the division, then it would have been handed over to the secretary, and the secretary would have given it to me.”

“But, your excellency,” said Akaky Akakiyevich, trying to collect his small handful of wits, and conscious at the same time that he was perspiring terribly, “I, your excellency, presumed to trouble you because secretaries-are an untrustworthy race.”

“What, what, what!” said the important personage. “Where did you get such courage? Where did you get such ideas? What impudence towards their chiefs and superiors has spread among the young generation!” The prominent personage apparently had not observed that Akaky Akakiyevich was already in the neighbourhood of fifty. If he could be called a young man, it must have been in comparison with some one who was seventy. “Do you know to whom you are speaking? Do you realise who is standing before you? Do you realise it? Do you realise it, I ask you!” Then he stamped his foot, and raised his voice to such a pitch that it would have frightened even a different man from Akaky Akakiyevich.

Akaky Akakiyevich’s senses failed him. He staggered, trembled in every limb, and, if the porters had not run in to support him, would have fallen to the floor. They carried him out insensible. But the prominent personage, gratified that the effect should have surpassed his expectations, and quite intoxicated with the thought that his word could even deprive a man of his senses, glanced sideways at his friend in order to see how he looked upon this, and perceived, not without satisfaction, that his friend was in a most uneasy frame of mind, and even beginning on his part, to feel a trifle frightened.

Akaky Akakiyevich could not remember how he descended the stairs, and got into the street. He felt neither his hands nor feet. Never in his life had he been so rated by any high official, let alone a strange one. He went staggering on through the snow-storm, which was blowing in the streets, with his mouth wide open. The wind, in St. Petersburg fashion, darted upon him from all quarters, and down every cross-street. In a twinkling it had blown a quinsy into his throat, and he reached home unable to utter a word. His throat was swollen, and he lay down on his bed. So powerful is sometimes a good scolding!

The next day a violent fever developed. Thanks to the generous assistance of the St. Petersburg climate, the malady progressed more rapidly than could

have been expected, and when the doctor arrived, he found, on feeling the sick man's pulse, that there was nothing to be done, except to prescribe a poultice, so that the patient might not be left entirely without the beneficent aid of medicine. But at the same time, he predicted his end in thirty-six hours. After this he turned to the landlady, and said, "And as for you, don't waste your time on him. Order his pine coffin now, for an oak one will be too expensive for him."

Did Akaky Akakiyevich hear these fatal words? And if he heard them, did they produce any overwhelming effect upon him? Did he lament the bitterness of his life?—We know not, for he continued in a delirious condition. Visions incessantly appeared to him, each stranger than the other. Now he saw Petrovich, and ordered him to make a cloak, with some traps for robbers, who seemed to him to be always under the bed; and he cried every moment to the landlady to pull one of them from under his coverlet. Then he inquired why his old mantle hung before him when he had a new cloak. Next he fancied that he was standing before the prominent person, listening to a thorough setting-down and saying, "Forgive me, your excellency!" but at last he began to curse, uttering the most horrible words, so that his aged landlady crossed herself, never in her life having heard anything of the kind from him, and more so as these words followed directly after the words "your excellency." Later on he talked utter nonsense, of which nothing could be made, all that was evident being that these incoherent words and thoughts hovered ever about one thing, his cloak.

At length poor Akaky Akakiyevich breathed his last. They sealed up neither his room nor his effects, because, in the first place, there were no heirs, and, in the second, there was very little to inherit beyond a bundle of goose-quills, a quire of white official paper, three pairs of socks, two or three buttons which had burst off his trousers, and the mantle already known to the reader. To whom all this fell, God knows. I confess that the person who told me this tale took no interest in the matter. They carried Akaky Akakiyevich out, and buried him.

And St. Petersburg was left without Akaky Akakiyevich, as though he had never lived there. A being disappeared, who was protected by none, dear to none, interesting to none, and who never even attracted to himself the attention of those students of human nature who omit no opportunity of thrusting a pin through a common fly and examining it under the microscope. A being who bore meekly the jibes of the department, and went to his grave

without having done one unusual deed, but to whom, nevertheless, at the close of his life, appeared a bright visitant in the form of a cloak, which momentarily cheered his poor life, and upon him, thereafter, an intolerable misfortune descended, just as it descends upon the heads of the mighty of this world!

Several days after his death, the porter was sent from the department to his lodgings, with an order for him to present himself there immediately, the chief commanding it. But the porter had to return unsuccessful, with the answer that he could not come; and to the question, "Why?" replied, "Well, because he is dead! he was buried four days ago." In this manner did they hear of Akaky Akakiyevich's death at the department. And the next day a new official sat in his place, with a handwriting by no means so upright, but more inclined and slanting.

But who could have imagined that this was not really the end of Akaky Akakiyevich, that he was destined to raise a commotion after death, as if in compensation for his utterly insignificant life? But so it happened, and our poor story unexpectedly gains a fantastic ending.

A rumour suddenly spread through St. Petersburg, that a dead man had taken to appearing on the Kalinkin Bridge, and its vicinity, at night in the form of an official seeking a stolen cloak, and that, under the pretext of its being the stolen cloak, he dragged, without regard to rank or calling, every one's cloak from his shoulders, be it cat-skin, beaver, fox, bear, sable, in a word, every sort of fur and skin which men adopted for their covering. One of the department officials saw the dead man with his own eyes, and immediately recognised in him Akaky Akakiyevich. This, however, inspired him with such terror, that he ran off with all his might, and therefore did not scan the dead man closely, but only saw how the latter threatened him from afar with his finger. Constant complaints poured in from all quarters, that the backs and shoulders, not only of titular but even of court councillors, were exposed to the danger of a cold, on account of the frequent dragging off of their cloaks.

Arrangements were made by the police to catch the corpse, alive or dead, at any cost, and punish him as an example to others, in the most severe manner. In this they nearly succeeded, for a watchman, on guard in Kirinshkin Lane, caught the corpse by the collar on the very scene of his evil deeds, when attempting to pull off the frieze cloak of a retired musician. Having seized him by the collar, he summoned, with a shout, two of his

comrades, whom he enjoined to hold him fast, while he himself felt for a moment in his boot, in order to draw out his snuff-box, and refresh his frozen nose. But the snuff was of a sort which even a corpse could not endure. The watchman having closed his right nostril with his finger, had no sooner succeeded in holding half a handful up to the left, than the corpse sneezed so violently that he completely filled the eyes of all three. While they raised their hands to wipe them, the dead man vanished completely, so that they positively did not know whether they had actually had him in their grip at all. Thereafter the watchmen conceived such a terror of dead men that they were afraid even to seize the living, and only screamed from a distance. "Hey, there! go your way!" So the dead official began to appear even beyond the Kalinkin Bridge, causing no little terror to all timid people.

But we have totally neglected that certain prominent personage who may really be considered as the cause of the fantastic turn taken by this true history. First of all, justice compels us to say, that after the departure of poor, annihilated Akaky Akakiyevich, he felt something like remorse. Suffering was unpleasant to him, for his heart was accessible to many good impulses, in spite of the fact that his rank often prevented his showing his true self. As soon as his friend had left his cabinet, he began to think about poor Akaky Akakiyevich. And from that day forth, poor Akaky Akakiyevich, who could not bear up under an official reprimand, recurred to his mind almost every day. The thought troubled him to such an extent, that a week later he even resolved to send an official to him, to learn whether he really could assist him. And when it was reported to him that Akaky Akakiyevich had died suddenly of fever, he was startled, hearkened to the reproaches of his conscience, and was out of sorts for the whole day.

Wishing to divert his mind in some way and drive away the disagreeable impression, he set out that evening for one of his friends' houses, where he found quite a large party assembled. What was better, nearly every one was of the same rank as himself, so that he need not feel in the least constrained. This had a marvellous effect upon his mental state. He grew expansive, made himself agreeable in conversation, in short, he passed a delightful evening. After supper he drank a couple of glasses of champagne-not a bad recipe for cheerfulness, as every one knows. The champagne inclined him to various adventures, and he determined not to return home, but to go and see a certain well-known lady, of German extraction, Karolina Ivanovna, a lady, it appears, with whom he was on a very friendly footing.

It must be mentioned that the prominent personage was no longer a young man, but a good husband and respected father of a family. Two sons, one of whom was already in the service, and a good-looking, sixteen-year-old daughter, with a slightly arched but pretty little nose, came every morning to kiss his hand and say, "*Bon jour, papa.*" His wife, a still fresh and good-looking woman, first gave him her hand to kiss, and then, reversing the procedure, kissed his. But the prominent personage, though perfectly satisfied in his domestic relations, considered it stylish to have a friend in another quarter of the city. This friend was scarcely prettier or younger than his wife; but there are such puzzles in the world, and it is not our place to judge them. So the important personage descended the stairs, stepped into his sledge, said to the coachman, "To Karolina Ivanovna's," and, wrapping himself luxuriously in his warm cloak, found himself in that delightful frame of mind than which a Russian can conceive nothing better, namely, when you think of nothing yourself, yet when the thoughts creep into your mind of their own accord, each more agreeable than the other, giving you no trouble either to drive them away, or seek them. Fully satisfied, he recalled all the gay features of the evening just passed and all the mots which had made the little circle laugh. Many of them he repeated in a low voice, and found them quite as funny as before; so it is not surprising that he should laugh heartily at them. Occasionally, however, he was interrupted by gusts of wind, which, coming suddenly, God knows whence or why, cut his face, drove masses of snow into it, filled out his cloak-collar like a sail, or suddenly blew it over his head with supernatural force, and thus caused him constant trouble to disentangle himself.

Suddenly the important personage felt some one clutch him firmly by the collar. Turning round, he perceived a man of short stature, in an old, worn uniform, and recognised, not without terror, Akaky Akakiyevich. The official's face was white as snow, and looked just like a corpse's. But the horror of the important personage transcended all bounds when he saw the dead man's mouth open, and heard it utter the following remarks, while it breathed upon him the terrible odour of the grave: "Ah, here you are at last! I have you, that-by the collar! I need your cloak. You took no trouble about mine, but reprimanded me. So now give up your own."

The pallid prominent personage almost died of fright. Brave as he was in the office and in the presence of inferiors generally, and although, at the sight of his manly form and appearance, every one said, "Ugh! how much

character he has!" at this crisis, he, like many possessed of an heroic exterior, experienced such terror, that, not without cause, he began to fear an attack of illness. He flung his cloak hastily from his shoulders and shouted to his coachman in an unnatural voice, "Home at full speed!" The coachman, hearing the tone which is generally employed at critical moments, and even accompanied by something much more tangible, drew his head down between his shoulders in case of an emergency, flourished his whip, and flew on like an arrow. In a little more than six minutes the prominent personage was at the entrance of his own house. Pale, thoroughly scared, and cloakless, he went home instead of to Karolina Ivanovna's, reached his room somehow or other, and passed the night in the direst distress; so that the next morning over their tea, his daughter said, "You are very pale to-day, papa." But papa remained silent, and said not a word to any one of what had happened to him, where he had been, or where he had intended to go.

This occurrence made a deep impression upon him. He even began to say, "How dare you? Do you realise who is standing before you?" less frequently to the under-officials, and, if he did utter the words, it was only after first having learned the bearings of the matter. But the most noteworthy point was, that from that day forward the apparition of the dead official ceased to be seen. Evidently the prominent personage's cloak just fitted his shoulders. At all events, no more instances of his dragging cloaks from people's shoulders were heard of. But many active and solicitous persons could by no means reassure themselves, and asserted that the dead official still showed himself in distant parts of the city.

In fact, one watchman in Kolomen saw with his own eyes the apparition come from behind a house. But the watchman was not a strong man, so he was afraid to arrest him, and followed him in the dark, until, at length, the apparition looked round, paused, and inquired, "What do you want?" at the same time showing such a fist as is never seen on living men. The watchman said, "Nothing," and turned back instantly. But the apparition was much too tall, wore huge moustaches, and, directing its steps apparently towards the Obukhov Bridge, disappeared in the darkness of the night.

CHRISTMAS EVE

The last day before Christmas had passed. Wintry lucid night had arrived. The stars looked out. The stately moon rose in the sky to shine for good people and the whole world, so that everyone might be gay and sing carols praising Christ. The frost was sharper than in the morning, but everything was so quiet that its crunching under the boot could be heard half a versta away. No gathering of young men yet appeared beneath the windows of the houses. Only the moon peeped into them stealthily, as it tempting the girls to hurry with their dressing up and run out on to the creaking snow.

From the chimney of one house a column of smoke arose and spread in a cloud over the sky and with the smoke rose a witch riding on a broomstick. If the assessor from Sorochinsky had been passing at the time, driven by all his three horses, wearing his Lancer-like cap with a sheepskin band, and his blue coat lined with sheepskin, with his whip devised by the devil which he uses to urge on his driver, then he would surely have noticed her. For there is not a witch in the whole world that can escape from the Sorochinsky assessor. He can remember the number of piglets the peasant woman's pig delivered, how much linen lies in her trunk and exactly what piece of his clothing or of his household goods a citizen will pawn in the tavern on Sunday. But the Sorochinsky assessor was not travelling by and, after all, what business of his are strangers – he has his own district.

Meanwhile, the witch had risen so high, that she flashed by above like a mere-black speck. But wherever the black speck appeared there the stars, one after the other, disappeared from the sky. Soon the witch had collected a sleeve full of them. Three or four still sparkled. Suddenly, from the opposite direction, another speck appeared. It grew, began to expand and was no longer a speck. A shortsighted marr, even had he put on his nose the wheels of the commissar's carriage instead of spectacles, still could not have discerned what it was. In front it looked exactly like a German. The tip of its small narrow snout, which turned about incessantly sniffing everything it came across, was round like a pig's. Its legs were so thin that, if the Mayor of Jareskovsh had possessed such, he would have broken them during the first "kazachok." On the other hand, from behind, it looked quite like a district lawyer in uniform, its hanging tail being as sharp and long as the flaps of the modem uniform. It was perhaps only by the goatlike beard under its snout

and the smallish horns sticking out of its head and the fact that the whole of it was not whiter than a chimney sweep, that one could see it was neither a German nor a district lawyer, but just a devil with one night left to roam the wide world, instructing good people in sin. To-morrow, when the first bells peel the morning service, he will tuck in his tail and, without looking back, run straight into his den.

Meanwhile the Devil stealthily drew up to the moon and had already stretched out his hand to seize it, when he suddenly jerked it back as if burnt. Sucking his fingers, he shook his leg and ran to it from the other side and again jumped away withdrawing his hand. But, despite his failures, the sly Devil did not cease his pranks. Running up to it, he suddenly grasped the moon with both hands. Grimacing and blowing, he kept throwing it from one hand to the other like a peasant who has taken a live ember with his bare hands for his pipe. Finally, he quickly hid it in his pocket and ran on as if nothing had happened.

Nobody in Dikanka heard how the Devil stole the moon. It is true that the district scribe, when leaving the pub on all fours, saw the moon dancing in the sky for no apparent reason and tried, on his oath, to convince the whole village of what he saw. But the villagers shook their heads and even made fun of him.

And why did the Devil embark on such lawless business? This was the reason. He knew that the rich Cossack, Chub, had been invited by the Deacon to a party after the Mass for the dead, which would be attended by the Mayor, a relation of the Deacon (a bishop's chorister who had arrived in a blue jacket and could sing the lowest bass), the Cossack, Sverbiguz, and somebody else. There, in addition, to the kutya, would be mulled wine, vodka distilled with saffron and a multitude of various edibles. Meanwhile, Chub's daughter, the prettiest girl in the village, would remain at home, and to her would probably go the blacksmith, a very muscular and powerful young man who was more odious to the Devil than the sermons of Father Kondrat. In his spare time the blacksmith engaged in painting and was famous as the best painter in the whole neighborhood. L...ko himself, the Captain of a hundred Cossacks, who was alive at that time, had called him to Poltava expressly to paint the deal fence near his house. All the basins from which the Cossacks of Dikanka gulped their borsch, were painted by the blacksmith.

He was a god-fearing man and often drew pictures of the saints, and, even now, his evangelist Luke can be found in the Church of T... The triumph of

his art, however, was a picture painted on the church wall in the main entrance. In that he had depicted Saint Peter on Doomsday, with keys in his hands, evicting the evil spirit from hell. The frightened Devil was tossing in all directions, having a presentiment of his perdition, and sinners, released from imprisonment, were thrashing him and chasing him with whips and sticks and anything else they could get hold of. When the painter was laboring over this picture, painting it on a large wooden board, the Devil had tried with everything in his power to hinder him. He invisibly pushed the painter's hand and, raising cinders from the furnace of the smithy, scattered them over the picture, but, despite everything, the work was finished and the board carried into the church and fixed to the wall of the entrance. From that time on the Devil swore to take vengeance on the blacksmith.

Only one night remained for him to roam the wide world, but, during that night, he was seeking somehow to avenge his wrath on the blacksmith. That was why he resolved to steal the moon. He knew that old Chub was lazy and disinclined to move, that his house was not too near to the Deacon's, that the road stretched behind the village past the mills and the graveyard and wound round a ravine. On a moonlit night mulled wine and vodka distilled with saffron might have tempted Chub, but, in complete darkness, hardly anyone would manage to drag him from the stove and tempt him out of the house. And the blacksmith, who had been on bad terms with Chub for a long time, would never dare, despite his strength, to visit Chub's daughter in his presence.

Indeed, as soon as the Devil had hidden the moon in his pocket, it at once became so dark all over the world that few men could have found their way to the pub, let alone to the Deacon's. The witch, finding herself suddenly in the dark screamed out. At this the Devil drew up alongside, fawning, caught her arm and began to whisper into her ear the things usually whispered to all the feminine species.

Strangely is our world arranged. All living things strive to imitate and copy each other. In the past, in Mirgorod, only the Judge and perhaps the town Bailiff would walk in winter wearing sheepskin coats covered with cloth. All the minor officials wore them simply bare. But now the Assessor and other officials cover themselves with new lambskin coats with a cloth finish. The Chancery clerk and the district scribe, about three years ago, bought some blue nankeen at six griven an arshin. The sexton made himself loose nankeen trousers for the summer and a waistcoat from striped worsted

yam. In short – everybody tries to rise in the world! When will people stop being vain! I would wager that many will think it strange that the Devil should try to do the same. What is most annoying is that he probably thinks himself handsome when, as far as his appearance is concerned, one is ashamed to look at him. His muzzle, as Phoma Grigorievich used to say, is an abomination of abominations. Nevertheless he too makes love!

But, in the sky and under the sky, it became so dark that nothing further could be seen of what transpired between them.

* * *

“Then you haven’t been to the Deacon’s new house yet?” Cossack Chub asked this question, as he left the threshold of his house, of a tall emaciated peasant in a short sheepskin coat, whose overgrown beard showed that the fragment of scythe, with which the peasants usually trim their beard for lack of a razor, had not touched it for more than two weeks.

“There’s going to be some good drinking there,” continued Chub, a grin spreading over his face, “Only we mustn’t be late.”

Saying this, Chub straightened out his belt, which closely embraced his overcoat, pulled his cap more firmly over his eyes and tightened his grip on his whip which frightened and menaced the troublesome dogs. But, glancing up, he stopped.

“What the Devil! Look! Look, Panas.”

“What?” said his kinsman lifting up his head also.

“What do you mean what? The moon’s not there.”

“The Devil! You’re right, there’s no moon.”

“That’s it, there isn’t,” said Chub, with some annoyance at his kinsman’s invariable indifference. “Doesn’t mean a thing to you, probably.”

“And what can I do about it?”

“Some Devil,” continued Chub, wiping his moustache with his sleeve, “had to interfere. May he, the dog, have no glass of vodka to drink in the morning! It’s as if he did it to mock us... I purposely looked through the window when I was sitting in the house. The night was a miracle! The snow shining in the moonlight, everything visible, like daytime. Hardly do we leave the door and there, he might just as well have put my eyes out. May his teeth be broken on a dry oatcake!”

Chub continued to grumble and swear for a long time and in the meantime pondered what to do. He was extremely eager to chatter at the

Deacon's about all sorts of nonsense, where, without any doubt, the Mayor was already sitting with the foreign bass and the tarrer Mikita, who travelled every two weeks to Poltava to auctions and who played such tricks that all the villagers held their sides with laughter. Chub could already visualize the mulled wine standing on the table. All this was enticing, true, but the darkness of the night reminded him of that laziness which is so dear to all Cossacks. How good would it be to be lying now on the stove, with his feet drawn up, calmly smoking a pipe and listening drowsily to the carols and songs of the gay young men and girls, thronging in crowds under the windows. Had he been alone, no doubt, he would have decided on the latter course, but now, for the two of them, it would not be so dull or frightening to walk in the dark night. Moreover, after all, he did not want to appear lazy or cowardly to others. Having finished swearing, he again turned to his kinsman.

"Well, then, isn't there a moon, kinsman?"

"No."

"It's very strange, really. Give me a pinch of tobacco. Yours is nice tobacco, brother, where do you get it?"

"Nice, my foot," answered his -relative, closing his birch bark snuff box, pricked with a design: "It won't make an old hen sneeze."

"I can remember," continued Chub in the same tone, "the deceased publican Zuzulya once brought me some tobacco from Nyezhin. Ech, that was some tobacco! That tobacco was good. Well then, brother, what shall we do? It's dark in the yard."

"Well, perhaps we'll stay at home," uttered his relative, grasping the handle of the door.

Had his kinsman not said this, then Chub would have probably decided to stay, but now something seemed to drive him to do the opposite.

"No, friend, let's go. Impossible, we've got to go!"

Having said this, he became annoyed with himself for having said it. It was very unpleasant for him to trail along on such a night, but he was consoled by the thought that it was his own deliberate decision and that he was not following anybody else's advice.

The relative, without showing on his face the slightest trace of annoyance, like a man to whom it makes absolutely no difference whether he sits at home or drags himself out of it, looked around, scratched his shoulders with the handle of his whip – and the two kinsman departed on their journey.

* * *

Now let us see what is happening to the beautiful daughter, who had remained alone.

Oksana was not quite seventeen, yet in almost all the world, on the other side of Dikanka as well as this side of Dikanka, there was nothing but talk about her. The young men declared unanimously that there had never been a finer girl in the village and that there never would be. Oksana knew and heard everything that was said about her, and was as temperamental as behoves a beauty. Had she worn neither petticoat nor blouse, but just a dressing gown, she would still have surpassed all other girls. The young men pursued her in crowds, but, losing patience, left the willful beauty one by one and turned to others not so spoilt. The blacksmith alone was stubborn and did not stop trailing after her, although he, too, was dealt with not in the least better than the others.

After her father's departure, Oksana dressed herself up for a long time and preened herself before a small mirror in a pewter frame and could not admire herself enough.

"Why have people got it into their heads to praise my beauty?" she was saying, as if absentmindedly and merely for the sake of having a chat with herself, "People are lying, I'm not beautiful at all."

But the reflection in the mirror of a fresh, lively face of childlike youth with gleaming black eyes and an inexpressibly sweet smile, which burnt the soul, quickly demonstrated the contrary.

"Are my black brows and eyes then," continued the maiden, without relinquishing the mirror, "so beautiful that there are none equal to them in the world? What is good about this turned-up nose? And these cheeks? And these lips? Are my black plaits really pretty? Uch, they could be frightening in the evening: like long snakes they are coiled and twisted round my head. I can see now that I'm not beautiful at all!"

And removing the mirror a little further from herself, she exclaimed:

"No, I am beautiful! Ach, how beautiful! Wonderful! What joy I'll bring to him whose wife I shall be! How my husband will admire me! He'll forget himself with joy! He'll smother me with kisses."

"Strange girl," whispered the blacksmith who had entered quietly. "How little vanity she possesses! She stands for hours looking into the mirror and can't see enough of herself, and praises herself aloud in addition."

"Yes, boy, am I not too good for you? Look at me!" continued the pretty

minx. “How gracefully I walk! My blouse is embroidered with red silk. And what ribbons are on my head! You won’t see a richer braid in all your life. All these have been bought for me by my father, so that the best young man in the world shall marry me.”

And smiling she turned around and saw the blacksmith...

She screamed and then stopped with a stern expression before him. The blacksmith became quite crestfallen. It is difficult to describe the expression on the girl’s slightly tanned face. There was sternness to be seen and contempt for the confusion of the blacksmith and a faintly perceptible blush of annoyance. All this was so blended and was so indescribably lovely, that you could have kissed her a million times, which would have been the best thing to do.

“Why have you come here?” began Oksana. “Do you want me to drive you out with a spade? You’re all masters at driving up to us. You’ll soon ferret out when our fathers aren’t at home. Oh, I know you. Tell me, is my trunk ready?”

“It will be ready, sweetheart, it will be ready after the holiday. If you only knew what pains I’ve taken over it. I haven’t left the smithy for two nights. Not even a parson’s wife will have such a trunk. I’ve used iron on the ironwork, such as I didn’t even use on the captain’s two-wheeled cart, when I worked in Poltava. And how it will be painted! Even if you walked the whole district on your little white feet, you wouldn’t find anything like it. It will be covered with red and blue flowers? It will shine like a flame. Don’t be angry with me! Allow me at least to talk to you, at least look at you.”

“Who’s stopping you? Talk and look.”

With this she sat down on a bench and again glanced into the mirror and began to straighten out the plaits on her head. She looked at her neck, at her new blouse embroidered with silk. A subtle expression of self-satisfaction showed itself on her lips and her fresh cheeks and was reflected in her eyes.

“Allow me to sit next to you,” said the blacksmith.

“Sit down,” said Oksana, preserving on her lips and in her pleased eyes the same expression.

“Wonderful, lovely Oksana, allow me to kiss you,” said the encouraged blacksmith and pressed her to him, with the intention of gleaning a kiss. But Oksana turned away her cheek as it almost touched the blacksmith’s lips, and pushed him away.

“What else do you want? When he has honey he wants a spoon as well!

Go away, your hands are harder than iron. And you smell of smoke. I should think you've stained me with your soot."

Here she held up the mirror and again began to preen herself before it.

"She doesn't love me," thought the blacksmith to himself, hanging his head. "It's all a game to her, and I stand before her like a fool and can't take my eyes off her. And I could go on standing before her and would never remove my eyes from her. Strange girl. What I'd give to find out what's on her mind. Whom she loves. But no, nobody matters to her. She admires herself, tortures me, wretched that I am, and I can't see the world through my longing. And I love her so much, as no man in the world has ever loved or will ever love."

"Is it true that your mother is a witch?" asked Oksana and began to laugh. And the blacksmith felt that inside him everything began to laugh. This laughter seemed to echo simultaneously in his heart and in his veins and then annoyance rose in his heart, that it was not in his power to cover this lovely laughing face with kisses.

"What do I care about my mother? You are mother and father to me and everything that's dear in the world. Had the Tsar summoned me and said: 'Blacksmith Vakula, ask me for the very best in my empire, I'll give it to you. I'll order you a golden smithy and you shall forge with silver hammers.' I'd say to the Tsar: 'I don't want either precious stones or a golden smithy or your empire. Just give me my Oksana.'"

"So that's what you're like! But my father isn't a fool either. You'll see, if he doesn't marry your mother." Oksana said, smiling roguishly. "But the girls haven't come... What does it mean? It was time for carol-singing hours ago, I'm getting bored."

"Leave them alone, my beautiful."

"Certainly not. The boys will probably come with them. Then it'll become gay. I can imagine the funny stories they'll tell."

"Are you merry with them then?"

"Merrier than with you. Ah! Somebody knocked, probably the girls and the boys."

"Why should I wait any longer," the blacksmith was talking to himself. "She mocks me. I am as dear to her as a rusty horseshoe. But if it's so, then at least I won't let someone else laugh at me. If only I can find out for certain who pleases her more than me, I'll teach..."

A knock at the door and a loudly sounding voice in the frost: "Open up,"

interrupted his meditations.

“Wait, I’ll open it myself,” said the blacksmith and left for the hall in a fury, intending to break the ribs of the first man he came across.

* * *

The frost increased and up above it became so cold, that the Devil skipped from one hoof to another and blew on his fists, seeking somewhat to warm his freezing hands.

It is small wonder that he should freeze, who knocks around Hell day and night, which, as we know, is not so cold as our Russian winter, and where, with his night-cap on and standing before the fireplace like a real eating-house keeper, he fries sinners with the same satisfaction as a peasant woman frying sausages for Christmas.

The witch herself began to feel the cold, although she was warmly dressed. Therefore, raising her hands, she lifted up a leg and in the posture of a man sliding on skates, she descended, without moving a muscle, through the air as from a steep icy mountain and landed straight in the chimney.

The Devil departed after her in the same manner. But, as this creature is more agile than any dandy in stockings, it is no wonder that he landed on the neck of his mistress at the very entrance of the chimney, where they both found themselves in the spacious stove among the pots.

The lady-traveler quietly pushed open the stove door to see whether her son Vakula had not invited some guests into the house. Perceiving that there was nobody there except some sacks which lay in the middle of the floor, she crept out of the stove, threw off her warm peasant coat and straightened herself up, and nobody would have guessed that a minute before she had been riding on a broom.

The mother of the blacksmith Vakula was not more than forty years old. She was neither handsome nor plain. After all, it is difficult to be beautiful at her age. Nevertheless, she was so bewitching to the steadiest Cossacks (to whom, there is no harm in remarking, beauty mattered little), that she was visited by the Mayor and by the Deacon Osip Nikiforovich (of course, if the Deacon’s wife was not at home) and the Cossack, Krnyo Chub, and the Cossack, Kasyan Sverbiguz. And, let it be said in her honor, she could manage them cleverly. Not one of them even dreamed that he had a rival. Both pious peasants and noblemen (as the Cossacks call themselves), who went dressed in cloak and hood to church on Sunday, or, if the weather was

bad, to the pub – saw nothing amiss in calling on Solokha, eating fat curd-dumplings with sour cream and having a chat in a warm house with that talkative and attentive hostess. The noblemen, especially for that purpose, made a long detour before reaching the pub and called it dropping in on the way. And when Solokha went to church on a feast-day, wearing a nankeen blouse with a bright petticoat and over it a blue skirt, with golden tassels sewn on at the back of it, and stood near the right choir, the Deacon would be sure to begin to cough and blink involuntarily in her direction, and the Mayor would stroke his moustache, wind his tuft of hair around his ear and say to his neighbor: “Ech, that’s a good woman! A devil of a woman!” Solokha bowed to everyone, and each thought that she was bowing to him alone.

But anybody who loved poking his nose into other people’s business would have noticed at once that Solokha was most affable of all to the Cossack Chub. Chub was a widower. Eight cornstacks always stood before his house. Two pairs of strong oxen pushed out their heads from his wattle-barn into the street and lowed, when they saw their approaching relative – the cow, or their uncle – a fat bull. The bearded buck-goat climbed to the very roof from which he bleated in a sharp voice like a town bailiff, teased the turkeys, which strutted about the yard, and exhibited his posterior when he saw his foes – the small boys – who jeered at his beard. A lot of linen, thick overcoats and ancient Polish surcoats with golden galloons lay in Chub’s trunks; his deceased wife had been an elegant woman. In addition to poppies, cabbages and sunflowers, two rows of tobacco were sown every year in his kitchen garden.

All this Solokha thought no harm in adding to her own household and, reflecting in advance how it would be arranged when it fell into her hands, she redoubled her benevolence towards old Chub. And to prevent her son Vakula from successfully courting Chub’s daughter and grabbing everything for himself – when he would probably not allow her to interfere with anything – she resorted to the usual method of all forty-year-old-widows – making mischief between Chub and the blacksmith as often as possible. It was perhaps due to these very guiles and to her shrewdness, that the old woman began, to gossip about her, especially when they had drunk a little more than usual in some gay reunion, saying that Solokha was certainly a witch, that the young man Kizyako-Inpenko had seen a tail behind her hack no bigger than a woman’s spindle, that two Thursdays ago she had run across the road in the shape of a black cat, that a pig had once rushed up to the

priest's wife, crowed like a cockerel, put Father Kondrat's cap on its head and had run away.

It so happened that when the old women were gossiping about it, a cowherd, Timish Korostyovi, arrived. He did not refrain from mentioning how in summer, before the very fast of St. Peter, when he lay down to sleep in the cattle-shed, having propped up his head with straw, he had with his own eyes seen the witch, with her hair falling loose over her shoulders and wearing only her night shirt, begin to milk the cows. He could not move – he was so bewitched – and she greased his bps with something so horrible, that he kept spitting the whole of the next day. All this, however, is somewhat dubious, for only the Sorochinsky Assessor can see a witch. And therefore all the leading Cossacks waved their hands when they heard such talk. ‘The bitches are lying,’ was their usual comment.

Having crept out of the stove and straightened herself out, Solokha, as behoves a good housewife, began to tidy up and put everything in its place, but she did not touch the sacks. “Vakula brought these in, he can carry them out.”

In the meantime the Devil, when he was still in the process of flying into the chimney, somehow happened to turn around and see Chub arm in arm with his relative, when they were still a long way from the house. He immediately flew out of the stove, ran across their path and began to dig up heaps of frozen snow from all directions. A snowstorm arose. The air turned white. The snow tossed about backwards and forwards like a net and threatened to plaster the eyes, mouths and ears of the pedestrians. The Devil flew back again into the chimney, firmly convinced that Chub and his relative would turn back, would find the blacksmith and would probably deal with him in such a manner, that for a long time he would not have the strength to take the paint brush in his hands and paint insulting caricatures.

* * *

Indeed, hardly had the snowstorm risen and the wind begun to sting and hurt his eyes, than Chub expressed repentance and pulling his hood deeper over his head, treated himself, the Devil and his relative to some swearing. As a matter of fact this annoyance was only simulated. Chub was very pleased with the raging snowstorm. The distance to the Deacon's remained eight times as long as they had walked. The travelers turned back. The wind blew at the back of their heads, but nothing was visible through the whirling

snow.

“Wait, brother! It seems we aren’t going in the right direction,” said Chub stepping aside a little, “I can’t see a single house. Ech, what a snowstorm! You, friend, turn a little to the side – see if you can’t find the road, and in the meantime I’ll look here. What demon drove me to roam about in such a snowstorm? Don’t forget to shout when you find the road. Ech, what a lot of snow the Devil has blown into my eyes.”

But the road was not to be seen. The relative, having walked off to the side; wandered back and fro in his high boots and at last stumbled straight on to the pub. This find so overjoyed him that he forgot everything and, shaking off the snow from himself, without worrying in the slightest about his friend who had remained in the street, he entered the hall.

In the meantime, it seemed to Chub that he had found the road. He stopped and began to shout with all his might, but seeing that his relative did not appear, decided to walk on alone. Sometime later he saw his house. Snow drifts were lying near it and on its roof. Clapping his hands which froze in the cold, he began to knock at the door and to shout in a commanding voice to his daughter to open it.

“What d’you want?” sternly shouted the blacksmith who had come out.

Chub, recognizing the blacksmith’s voice, stepped back a little.

“Ech no, that’s not my house,” he said to himself, “the blacksmith wouldn’t wander into my house. Yet, if you look at it closely, it isn’t the blacksmith’s either. Whose house can it be? There! I haven’t recognized it! It’s the cripple Levchenko’s house, who recently married a young wife. His is the only house like mine. That’s why it seemed a little strange to me at first to find I’d arrived home so quickly. But Levchenko is sitting now at the Deacon’s, that I do know. Why, then the blacksmith? E, hehehe! He goes to his young wife. That’s what it is! That’s good!... Now I’ve understood everything.”

“Who are you and why do you barge into people’s houses?” said the blacksmith more sternly than before and came nearer.

“No, shan’t tell him who I am,” thought Chub, “for all I know he’ll give me a beating, the accursed monster!” And changing his voice he answered:

“It’s me, good man! I came to you to sing a few carols for your entertainment.”

“Go to hell with your carol singing!” angrily shouted Vakula. “What are you standing about for? D’you hear? Get out of my sight immediately!”

Chub himself had this prudent intention, but it seemed insulting to him to be forced to obey the blacksmith's orders. As if some evil spirit pushed him and forced him to bid defiance.

"I don't see what you're shouting so much about!" he said in the same voice, "I want to sing carols and that's all there is to it."

"Ehe! I see that words have no effect on you!"

Chub felt a very painful blow on his shoulder following these words.

"I see, you're beginning to fight already," he said, stepping back a little.

"Go, away with you," shouted the blacksmith, presenting Chub with another blow.

"What's the matter with you?" said Chub in a voice which expressed pain, annoyance and fear. "I see, you want to fight seriously and to hurt too."

"Go, go away!" shouted the blacksmith and slammed the door.

"What cheek," Chub said, when he remained alone in the street. "You try and get nearer! See, what he's like Who does he think he is? You think I won't start proceedings in court. No, my good man, I certainly will and I'll go straight to the Commissioner. I'll show you, although you're a blacksmith and a painter. At any rate, I'd like to have a look at my back and shoulders, I bet they're black and blue. They should be. He's battered me, the son of an enemy. It's a pity it's cold, and I don't feel like throwing off my overcoat. You wait, you Devil's blacksmith. May the Devil smash you and your smithy. You'll do some coughing then! You damned gallows-bird! Still, he's not at home now. I bet Solokha's sitting there alone. Ahem! Not far from here, after all, I might go there. Nobody will surprise us at this time. May be, may be one could also... Ach, how painfully that blasted blacksmith has beaten me."

Chub scratched his back and departed in the opposite direction. The pleasure which he anticipated from the meeting with Solokha somewhat alleviated his pain and made hardly noticeable even the frost, which raged in the streets unallayed by the whistle of the blizzard. At times an almost sugary smile appeared on his face. His beard and moustache were lathered with snow by the storm more thoroughly than by any barber who tyrannically grasps his victim by the nose. If the snow had not obliterated everything, we should have long continued to see how Chub would stop to scratch his back and mutter: "He hit me hard the accursed blacksmith," and again depart on his way.

* * *

As the agile dandy, with the tail and goatlike beard, flew out of the chimney and then back again, the pouch, which hung tied to his side and in which he had hidden the stolen moon, somehow accidentally became caught on the stove. It fell open and the moon, taking the opportunity, flew out through the chimney of Solokha's house and gracefully rose in the sky. Everything became light again. The blizzard vanished completely. The snow began to sparkle like a wide silvery meadow and became studded with crystal stars. The frost seemed to become less acute. Crowds of young men and girls appeared with sacks. Songs began to resound and there were few houses before which carol singers were not crowding.

How wonderfully the moon shines! It is difficult to describe how good it is on such a night to jostle among a crowd of laughing, singing girls and young men, only too ready to joke and play tricks, that only such a gaily smiling night can inspire. It is warm in the peasant's tight-fitting overcoat; the cheeks burn even more vividly from the frost and the Devil himself is behind, pushing one on to frolics.

A crowd of girls with sacks broke into Chub's house and surrounded Oksana. Shouting, laughter and talking deafened the blacksmith. All of them vied with each other in telling the beautiful girl something new. They emptied the sacks and boasted of the small flat bread loaves, the sausages and dumplings, quite a considerable amount of which they had managed to collect for their carol singing. Oksana seemed full of happiness and joy, chatted to one and to another and laughed without stopping.

With a mixture of annoyance and envy the blacksmith gazed on this gaiety and this time cursed carol singing, although he used to be passionately fond of it.

"Ah, Odarka," said the gay beauty, turning to one of the girls: "You've new shoes on. Ach, how pretty they are, and with gold. You're lucky, Odarka, you have a man who buys you everything, and I have nobody who could get me such nice shoes."

"Don't worry, my darling Oksana," exclaimed the blacksmith, "I'll get you shoes that even a nobleman's daughter rarely wears."

"You?" said Oksana, and quickly looked at him haughtily. "I'd like to see where you'd get shoes, that I would put on my feet, unless you bring me the shoes the Empress is wearing."

"See, what she's got into her mind," the crowd of girls shouted with

laughter.

“Yes,” continued the beauty proudly, “you’re all witnesses; if the blacksmith Vakula brings me the shoes which the Empress is wearing, then here is my word that I’ll marry him immediately.”

The girls led the capricious beauty away with them.

“Laugh, laugh,” said the blacksmith leaving after them. “I, too, laugh at myself! I think and can’t make out where my brains have got to. She doesn’t love me – well, I’ll leave her alone. As if there were only one Oksana in the world. Thank God, there are many good girls beside her in the village. And what is Oksana? She’ll never make a good housewife; she’s only good at dressing up. No, it’s enough. It’s time to stop playing the fool.”

But just when the blacksmith intended to be resolute, some evil spirit carried past him Oksana’s image, which said mockingly: “Get me, blacksmith, the Empress’s shoes and I’ll marry you.” He became agitated and thought only about Oksana and her alone.

The crowds of carol singers, the men separate from the girls, hurried from one street into another but the blacksmith walked and saw nothing and did not take any part in these gaieties which once he used to love more than any others.

* * *

In the meantime, the Devil’s courting of Solokha became downright serious. He kissed her hand with the same mannerisms with which the Assessor pays court to the priest’s wife. He put his hand on his heart, sighed and said frankly that if she would not consent to gratify his passion and, as was usual, reward it, then he was ready to do anything; throw himself into the water, and dispatch his soul straight to Hell.

Solokha was not so cruel. Moreover, as is known, he played into her hands. Although she indeed liked to see a crowd dangling after her and was seldom without any visitors, she had expected to spend that evening alone, as all the eminent inhabitants of the village had been invited to the dinner at the Deacon’s after the Mass for the dead. But everything took a different course.

Hardly had the Devil confronted her with his demands, than suddenly a knocking and the voice of the stout Mayor were heard at the door. Solokha ran to open the door, and the agile Devil climbed into a sack.

The Mayor shook off the snow from his hood and, having accepted from Solokha’s hands a glass of vodka and drunk it, told her that he did not go to

the Deacon's as a snowstorm had risen and, seeing a light in her house, had called on her with the intention of spending the evening with her.

Hardly had the Mayor managed to say this, than a knock was heard at the door and the Deacon's voice.

"Hide me somewhere," whispered the Mayor. "I shouldn't like to meet the Deacon now."

Solokha thought for a long time where to hide such a thickset guest. Finally she chose the biggest sack of coal. She emptied the coal into the tub, and the stout Mayor, with his moustache, head and hood complete, crept into the sack.

The Deacon entered, groaning a little and rubbing his hands, and said that nobody had called on him and that he was extremely pleased with this opportunity of having a drink with her and that he had not been frightened by the snowstorm. Then he drew nearer to her, coughed, smiled at her, touched her bare stout arm with his long fingers, and said with a sly and self-satisfied air:

"And what have we here, magnificent Solokha?" and having said that, jumped back a little.

"What do you mean what? It's a hand, Osip Nikiforovich," answered Solokha.

"Ahem! A hand! He-he-he!" said the Deacon, heartily satisfied with this beginning, and strutted across the room.

"And what is this, dearest Solokha?" he said with the same expression, again drawing near, and touched her neck lightly with his hand and jumped back in the same manner.

"As if you didn't see, Osip Nikiforovich," answered Solokha. "It's my neck, and on my neck is a necklace."

"Ahem! On your neck is a necklace! He-he-he," and the Deacon again strutted across the room rubbing his hands.

"And what is this, incomparable Solokha?..."

Heaven knows what the lascivious Deacon would have touched next with his long fingers, but suddenly a knock was heard at the door and Cossack Chub's voice.

"Ach, Heavens, a stranger!" shouted the Deacon in his fright.

"God in Heaven, if they find a person of my calling here! It will reach Father Kondrat's ears..."

But the Deacon's apprehension were of a different kind. He was even

more anxious that his better half should not find out, for she, even without this additional pretext, had thinned his thick mop of hair with her terrible hand,

“For God’s sake, virtuous Solokha,” he said, all his body trembling, “they are knocking, by God, they’re knocking! Och, hide me somewhere.”

Solokha emptied the coal from another sack into the tub and the Deacon, whose body was not too bulky, crept into it and sat down at the very bottom of it, so that one could have poured about half a sacksful of coal on top of him.

“Hallo, Solokha,” said Chub entering the house,” perhaps you didn’t expect me, eh? You really didn’t expect me? Perhaps I’ve intruded?...” continued Chub, his face bearing a gay and significant expression, which indicated that his clumsy brain was working and preparing to release some labored and intricate witticism. “Perhaps you’ve been playing around with somebody here!... Perhaps you’ve hidden somebody, what?” and, enchanted by his own remarks, Chub began to laugh, inwardly triumphant that he was the only one to enjoy Solokha’s benevolence.

“Well, Solokha, now let me have some vodka to drink. I think my throat has frozen in the cursed frost. Why did God have to send such a night before Christmas! How it started, d’you hear, Solokha, how it started... Ek, my hands are numbed; can’t open my coat! How the blizzard started...”

“Open up!” A voice sounded in the street, accompanied by a push at the door.

“Somebody’s knocking,” said Chub and stopped.

“Open up!” came a shout louder than before.

“That’s the blacksmith,” said Chub grabbing his hood, “d’you hear, Solokha, put me where you like. Nothing in the world will make me appear before that accursed monster, the Devil’s son. May a pimple, as big as a hayrick, spring up under both his eyes.”

Solokha, who had become frightened, rushed around herself like a person possessed and, losing her wits, made a sign to Chub to creep into the same sack in which the Deacon was already sitting. The poor Deacon did not even dare to express his pain by coughing or groaning, when the heavy peasant sat down almost on his head and placed his long-frostbitten boots on both sides of his temples.

The blacksmith entered without saying a word or taking off his cap, and almost dropped on the bench. It was apparent that he was extremely out of

sorts.

Just as Solokha was closing the door behind him, somebody knocked again. This was Cossack Sverbiguz. He could not be hidden in a sack, because no such sack could be found anywhere. He was heavier in body than the Mayor himself and of greater height than Chub's relative. Therefore Solokha led him into the kitchen garden to listen to everything he wanted to impart to her.

The blacksmith absentmindedly surveyed the comers of his house, listening from time to time to the songs of the carol singers, which resounded in the village from far away. At last his eyes fell on the sacks.

"Why are these sacks lying here? They should have been taken away a long time ago. This love affair has made me quite crazy. It's a holyday tomorrow and all sorts of rubbish is still lying in the house. I'll carry them out to the smithy."

The blacksmith crouched down before the tremendous sacks, tied them more firmly and prepared to heave them on his shoulders. But it was obvious that his thoughts wandered God knows where, otherwise he would have heard how Chub began to hiss, when the hair on his head was twisted by the string which tied the sack, and how the corpulent Mayor began to hiccup quite distinctly.

"Won't this wretched Oksana really be driven out of my head?" said the blacksmith. "I don't want to think about her, but I still do, and, as if on purpose, only about her. Why do these thoughts steal into my head against my will? What the devil? The sacks seem to have become heavier than before! Something's probably been put into them besides the coal. I'm a fool! I've forgotten that everything seems heavier, to me now. Before, I used to be able to bend and unbend a brass coin with one hand and a horseshoe with the other, and now I can't lift a few sacks of coal. Soon I'll tumble down at a whiff of the wind... No!" he exclaimed after a silence, having taken courage, "what a woman I am! I shan't allow anybody to laugh at me! Even if there were ten such sacks – I'll lift them all."

And bravely he loaded his shoulders with the sacks, which two strong men could not have carried.

"I'll take this one too," he continued, lifting the small one at the bottom of which the Devil lay curled up. "I think I put some of my tools in here." Then he left the house whistling a song:

I won't be bothered with a wife.

* * *

Louder and louder echoed songs, laughter and shouting in the streets. The crowds “of jostling people were increased by the arrivals from neighboring villages. The young men played pranks and ran wild to their hearts’ content. Often, in between carol singing, some gay song would be heard which one of the young Cossacks had managed to compose on the spot. Laughter would reward the composer. Small windows would be pushed open and an emaciated old woman’s hand (these old women and sedate fathers were the only ones to remain indoors) would emerge, holding a sausage or a piece of pastry. The young men and the girls vied with each other in holding out the sacks and catching the booty. In one spot the young men appeared from all sides and surrounded a crowd of girls. Noise and shouting arose. One threw snowballs at them, another snatched away a sack with a variety of edibles in it. In another spot the girls would be catching a young man, and tripping him up so that he would fly headlong to the ground with his sack. They seemed prepared to spend the whole night in making merry. And the night, as if especially for that purpose, shone wonderfully. The moonlight seemed even brighter through the luster of the snow.

The blacksmith stopped with his sacks. He seemed to hear Oksana’s voice and her delicate laughter in the crowd of girls. All his nerves became alert. Throwing the sacks to the ground, so that the Deacon, who was at the bottom, groaned from the blow and the Mayor hiccupped quite audibly, the blacksmith with the small sack still on his shoulders, joined the crowd of young men who followed the crowd of girls, among whom he seemed to have heard Oksana’s voice.

“Yes, it’s her! She stands like a queen and her black eyes are blazing. A handsome man is telling her something, probably something funny, for she is laughing. But she’s always laughing.”

As if not of his own free will, without knowing how, he elbowed his way through the crowd and stood beside her.

“Ah, Vakula, you’re here! Hallo!” said the beauty with that smile, which almost drove Vakula mad. “Well, have you got much for your carol singing? Ech, but your sack’s small! Have you got the shoes which the Empress wears? Get the shoes and I’ll marry you.” And laughing she ran away with the crowd of girls.

The blacksmith stood as if rooted to the ground.

‘No, I can’t, I’ve no more strength left,” he said at last. “But my God,

why is she so devilishly beautiful? Her glance and talk, and everything, well, it just sets me on fire, just does... No, it's beyond me to master it. It's time to put an end to everything. May my soul perish! I'll drown myself in the mill pond and disappear."

With resolute steps he went forward, caught up with the crowd of girls, came up alongside Oksana and said in a firm voice:

"Good bye, Oksana. Look for whatever bridegroom you want. Fool whoever you want, but you won't see me again in this world."

The beauty seemed to be surprised, wanted to say something, but the blacksmith waved his hand and ran away.

"Where are you off to, Vakula?" shouted the young men, seeing the blacksmith begin to run.

"Good-bye, brothers," shouted the blacksmith in reply: "God willing, we'll meet in the next world, but in this one we're not meant to be merry together. Good-bye! Don't bear me any ill-will! Tell Father Kondrat that he should have a Mass said for my sinful soul. I haven't painted the candles for the icons of Christ and the Holy Mother, sinner that I am, because of worldly occupations. All the things found in my big trunk are for the church. Good-bye."

Having said this, the blacksmith again began to run with 'the sack on his back.

"He's gone mad," said the young men.

"Lost soul," piously mumbled an old woman who passed by, "I'll have to go and tell how the blacksmith hanged himself."

* * *

In the meantime Vakula, having run through several streets, stopped to get some breath.

"Really, where am I running to?" he thought, "as if everything was lost? I'll try one more remedy, I'll go to the Cossack from Zaporozhye, Bigbelly Paciuk. They say he knows all the devils and can do whatever comes into his head. I'll go. My soul will be lost in any case."

At this the Devil, who had been lying without moving for a long time, began to jump in the sack with joy, but the blacksmith decided that he had somehow caught at the sack with his hand and caused this movement. He hit the sack with his big fist, shook it with his shoulders and departed to Bigbelly Paciuk.

This Bigbelly Paciuk had indeed been a Cossack a long time ago. Whether he had been cashiered or had run away himself from Zaporozhye, nobody knew. For a long time, for ten years or perhaps fifteen, he had been living in Dikanka. At first he lived like a real Cossack from Zaporozhye, did no work whatever, slept three-quarters of the day, ate enough for six haymakers and drank almost a whole bucketful at one sitting. There was room for it, by the way, as Paciuk, despite his smallish stature, was quite massive in circumference. Moreover, the loose trousers, which he wore, were so wide that, however long his steps, his feet could not be seen and he looked like a distillery vat moving in the street. Perhaps this was why he was nicknamed Bigbelly. Not many weeks had passed after his arrival in the village, before everybody had found out that he was a sorcerer. If anybody had anything wrong with him, he immediately called in Paciuk. And all Paciuk had to do was to whisper several words and the illness would be completely remedied. If it so happened that a hungry nobleman choked with a fishbone, Paciuk knew exactly how to hit his back so skillfully with his fist, that the bone would depart where it belonged, without causing the noble throat any harm. Lately he had seldom been seen anywhere. It was possibly caused by laziness, and perhaps also by the fact that it had become more difficult every year for him to squeeze himself out through the door. Consequently the villagers had to come to him if they had need of him.

The blacksmith opened the door, not without trepidation, and saw Paciuk sitting on the floor in the Turkish fashion before a smallish tub, on which stood a basin with small dumplings. This basin was placed apparently intentionally on a level with his mouth. Without moving a single finger, he slightly bent his head to the basin and sipped the gravy, seizing the dumplings from time to time with his teeth.

“This one,” thought Vakula, “is even lazier than Chub, who at least eats with a spoon, while this one doesn’t even want to raise his hand.”

Paciuk must certainly have been very engrossed in the dumplings, because it appeared that he had not noticed the arrival of the blacksmith, who had hardly crossed the threshold before he made him an extremely low bow.

“I’ve come to beseech your aid, Paciuk,” said Vakula bowing again.

Fat Paciuk raised his head and again began to eat the dumplings.

“Don’t be angry with me, they say...” said the blacksmith, gathering courage, “I’m not talking for the sake of insulting you – that you’re a distant relation of the Devil.”

Having uttered these words Vakula became frightened and thought that he had expressed himself too bluntly and had not sufficiently veiled the insulting words. Expecting that Paciuk would grab the tub together with the basin and hurl it straight at his head, he stepped aside a little and covered himself with his sleeve, so that the hot gravy from the dumplings should not bespatter his face.

But Paciuk looked up and again began to eat the dumplings.

The blacksmith, feeling encouraged, decided to continue:

“I came to you, Paciuk. May God grant you everything, goods and chattels in abundance, bread in proportion! (The blacksmith sometimes could turn out a modern phrase; he had become accustomed to that during his stay in Poltava, when he painted the captain’s deal fence): “I have to perish, sinner that I am. Nothing in the world can help me. What is to be, must be. I have to ask help from the Devil himself. So, Paciuk,” the blacksmith said, observing his continued silence: “what shall I do?”

“Who needs the Devil, should go to the Devil,” answered Paciuk, without raising his eyes and continuing to devour the dumplings.

“That’s why I’ve come to you,” said the blacksmith, making a low bow. “I think, apart from you, nobody in the world knows the way to him.”

Paciuk, without a word, polished off the remaining dumplings.

“Help me, be kind, don’t refuse,” urged the blacksmith. “Whether it’s pork, or sausages, buckwheat flour, or – if you like – linen, millet meal or anything else, if needs be... I know what’s customary among decent people... I won’t be mean. Tell me at least how, for example, I can more or less happen to hit on the right road for him.”

“There is no need for him to go far, who has the Devil behind him,” answered Paciuk indifferently, without changing his posture.

Vakula gazed fixedly at him, as if the explanation of these words was written on his forehead.

“What’s he saying?” wordlessly asked his expression and his gaping mouth, prepared to swallow the first word like a dumpling.

But Paciuk was silent.

At this point Vakula noticed that Paciuk had neither dumplings nor tub in front of him, but instead two wooden basins stood on the floor; one filled with curd-dumplings, the other with sour cream. His thoughts and eyes involuntarily turned to these dishes.

“I wonder,” he said to himself, “how Paciuk will eat the curd-dumplings.

He probably won't want to bend down and it's impossible to avoid using your hands. You have to dip the curd-dumplings in the sour cream first."

He hardly had the time to think this out, when Paciuk opened his mouth wide, looked at the curd-dumplings and opened his mouth even wider. Immediately a curd-dumpling flapped out of the basin, flopped down into the sour cream, turned over on the other side, jumped up and flew straight into his mouth. Paciuk ate it and again opened his mouth wide, and a curd-dumpling entered it in the same order. He took upon himself only the hard work of chewing and swallowing.

"See, a miracle!" thought the blacksmith, opening his mouth wide in amazement and immediately perceived that a curd-dumpling was climbing into his own mouth and had already smeared it with sour cream. Pushing the curd-dumpling away he wiped his lips and began to reflect on the miracles which occur in the world and the wisdom that the evil spirit brings to man, observing at the same time that Paciuk alone could help him.

"I'll bow to him again. Perhaps he'll explain it better... Here, what the devil! It's a fast day and he's eating curd-dumplings, which are forbidden on fast days. What a fool I am to stand here and be infected by sin! Back I go..." and the devout blacksmith ran helter skelter out of the house.

But the Devil, who sat in the sack and was rejoicing in anticipation, could not bear to have such nice prey escape from his hands. As soon as the blacksmith put down the sack, he jumped out of it and sat down on his neck.

Goosepimples covered the blacksmith's skin. He became frightened and pale and did not know what to do. He was already on the point of making the sign of the cross... but the Devil bent his dog's snout to his right ear and said:

-

"It's me, your friend. I'll do anything for a comrade and friend! I'll give you as much money as you want," he squeaked into the blacksmith's left ear.

"Oksana will be ours this very day," he whispered, turning his muzzle again to the blacksmith's right ear.

The blacksmith stood still and pondered.

"So be it," he said at last, "for such a price I'll be yours!"

The Devil clapped his hands and began to gallop with joy on the blacksmith's neck.

"Now, the blacksmith is caught," he thought to himself, "and now I'll revenge myself on you, my friend, for all your paintings and lies which malign us Devils. What will my comrades say now, when they find out that

the most pious man in the whole village is in my hands?”

Here the Devil began to laugh with joy at the thought of how he would tease all the long-tailed tribe of hell and how enraged would be the Devil with the limp, who thought himself the best of them all at fibbing.

“Well, Vakula,” squeaked the Devil, still without climbing down from his neck as if afraid that he might run away, “you know that nothing is done without an agreement.”

“I’m ready,” said the blacksmith. “I heard that with you people one signs with blood. Wait then, I’ll get a nail from my pocket.”

Here he put his hand behind him and seized the Devil by the tail.

“See, what a jester,” screamed the Devil with laughter. “Well, that’s enough, leave off your pranks.”

“Wait, little pigeon,” shouted the blacksmith. “And how will you like this?”

As he said the last word, the blacksmith made the sign of the cross and the Devil became as quiet as a lamb.

“You wait,” said the blacksmith, dragging the Devil down to the ground by his tail, “I’ll teach you how to entice good people and honest Christians to sin.”

Here the blacksmith jumped on top of him and raised his hand with the intention of making the sign of the cross.

“Have mercy, Vakula,” piteously groaned the Devil. “Everything you need, I’ll do it all, only release my soul for repentance, don’t put the terrible cross on me.”

“Ah, that’s a new tune you’re singing, you blasted German! I know now what to do. I’ll ride on you straightaway. D’you hear? And fly like a bird...”

“Where to?” said the sad Devil.

“To Petersburg, straight to the Empress.”

And the blacksmith became benumbed with fear, as he felt himself raised into the air.

* * *

Oksana stood for a long time thinking of the blacksmith’s strange talk. Inwardly something was telling her that she had treated him too cruelly.

“What if he really decides on something terrible! He might! Perhaps in his grief he’ll take it into his head to fall in love with someone else, and out of spite begin to call her the most beautiful girl in the village? But no, he

loves me. I'm so beautiful. He won't exchange me for anything in the world, he's fooling me, pretending. Ten minutes won't pass, probably, before he comes to look at me. Perhaps I have been harsh. I'll have to let him kiss me, as if against my will. Won't he be pleased...!"

And the fickle beauty proceeded joking with her girl-friends.

"Wait," said one of them, "the blacksmith has forgotten his sacks. Look what terrific sacks they are. He's got more than we did for his carol singing. I should say a quarter of a sheep's been thrown in here, and there's probably no counting the sausages and the bread. Wonderful! One could stuff oneself throughout the whole of the festival."

"Are these the blacksmith's sacks?" exclaimed Oksana. "Let's quickly drag them into my house and let's have a good look at what he's put in them."

Everybody acclaimed this suggestion with laughter.

"But we can't lift them!" suddenly shouted the whole crowd, straining to move the sacks.

"Wait," said Oksana. "Let's run quickly and get the sledge and we'll carry them away in it." And the crowd ran to fetch the sledge.

The prisoners had become extremely bored sitting in the sacks, in spite of the fact that the Deacon had made quite a considerable hole for himself with his finger. If there were no people about, he might perhaps have also found some means of creeping out, but to creep out of the sack in everybody's presence, to be turned to ridicule... that restrained him and he decided to wait and only groaned slightly under Chub's impolite boots.

Chub himself longed for freedom no less, feeling as he did that something lay under him, on which it was extremely awkward to sit. But as soon as he heard his daughter's decision, he calmed down and did not want to get out, reasoning that at least a hundred, or may be two hundred, steps had to be walked to his house, and having got but he would have to set himself right, button his overcoat, tie his belt – such a lot of work! Moreover, his hood had been left at Solocha's. Rather let the girls drive him up in the sledge.

But it turned out quite differently from what Chub had expected. Just as the girls ran for the sledges, his emaciated relative was leaving the pub, upset and out of sorts. The landlady would on no account take the risk of giving him drink on credit. At first he wanted to wait in the pub, hoping that some pious nobleman might arrive and treat him, but, as if on purpose, all the noblemen remained at home, like honest Christians, among their household.

Reflecting on corrupt morals and on the stony heart of the Jewess who sold wine, the relative stumbled on to the sacks and stopped in amazement.

“Look at these sacks somebody has thrown down on the road,” he said, looking round. “There’s probably some pork in them. Somebody must have had all the luck to get such a lot of odds and ends for his carol singing. What tremendous sacks! Supposing that they’re stuffed with buckwheat cakes and biscuits, even that’s good. If there are only loaves of bread in them, that, too, is useful – the Jewess gives a small nip of vodka for each loaf. I’d better grab them quickly, so that nobody should see.”

Here he heaved the sack containing Chub and the deacon on to his shoulders, but felt that it was too heavy.

“No, it’ll be difficult to carry it alone,” he mused. But there, as if one purpose, came the weaver Shapovalenko. “Hallo, Ostap.”

“Hallo,” said the weaver and stopped.

“Where’re you going?”

“Nowhere, I go where my legs go.”

“Help me, there’s a good chap, to carry the sacks. Somebody did some carol singing and then threw them in the middle of the road. We’ll go fifty-fifty.”

“The sacks? And what’s in them, white or brown bread?”

“I think there’ll be a bit of everything there.”

Here they hurriedly pulled out some sticks from a wattled hedge, put the sack on them and began to carry it on their shoulders.

“Where shall we carry it then? Into the pub?” asked the weaver on the way.

“That’s what I thought, but the accursed Jewess won’t believe us. She’ll probably think we’ve stolen it somewhere. In any case, I’ve just left the pub. Let’s carry it into my house. Nobody will disturb us there; the wife’s not at home.”

“Are you sure she’s not at home?” asked the cautious weaver.

“Thank God, we haven’t lost our minds yet,” said the relative, “even the Devil would not take me where she is. I think she’ll be trailing around with the women till daylight.”

“Who’s there?” shouted the relative’s wife, hearing a noise in the hall, caused by the arrival of the two friends with the sack, and opened the door of the house.

The relative was thunderstruck.

“What did I tell you,” said the weaver, losing heart.

The relative’s wife was a treasure of a kind not un plentiful in this wide world. Like her husband, she hardly ever sat at home. Almost her whole day was spent cringing before gossips and well-to-do old women, praising their food and eating it with a good appetite. She fought with her husband in the mornings only, because it was only then that she occasionally saw him. Their house was twice as old as the loose trousers of the district scribe; the roof in several places was without any straw. Only the remains of the wattle hedge were to be seen, because people, on leaving their houses, never took a stick for the dogs, in the hope that they would pass the relative’s kitchen garden and pull out the stick they wanted from his hedge. The stove would remain unlit for three days at a time. Everything that his tender wife managed to scrounge she hid as far as she could from her husband, and often, without any authority, took away from him what he had managed to acquire. That is, if he had not succeeded in drinking it away at the pub. The relative, despite his invariable stolidity, did not care to give in to her and so almost always left the house with a pair of black eyes, while his better half would ramble off groaning, to complain to her cronies about her dissolute husband and the beatings she suffered at his hands.

One can imagine now how nonplussed were the weaver and the relative by such an unexpected apparition.

Dropping the sack on the ground, they hid it by standing in front of it and covering it with their coat tails, but it was already too late. The relative’s wife, although she could see badly with her old eyes, had, nevertheless, spotted the sack.

“That’s good,” she said with an expression which showed a vulture’s delight. “It’s good that you’ve got so much for your carol singing. Decent people always do that... But no, I think you’ve picked it up somewhere. Show it to me immediately, d’you hear me! At once! Show me your sack.”

“A bald Devil will show you, but we won’t,” said the relative assuming a dignified air.

“What business is it of yours?” said the weaver. “We’ve got it for our carol singing, not you.”

“No, you’ll show me, you rotten drunkard,” cried the wife, hitting the tall relative with her fist on his chin and breaking through to the sack.

But the weaver and the relative manfully defended it and forced her to retreat. They hardly had time to recover, when the spouse ran out into the hall

with a poker in her hands. Dexterously wielding the poker she struck her husband's hands and the weaver's back and in a moment forced her way to the sack.

"Why did we let her get at it?" said the weaver, recovering his senses.

"Ech, why have we! And why did you let her?" said the relative phlegmatically.

"Your poker's apparently made of iron," said the weaver after a short silence, during which he scratched his back. "Last year my wife bought a poker at the fair, gave twenty-five kopeks; that's not bad... doesn't hurt..."

In the meantime the triumphant wife put down the lamp on the floor, untied the sack and looked into it.

But apparently her old eyes, which had perceived the sack so readily, had deceived her this time.

"Ech, there's a whole boar lying here!" she exclaimed, clapping her hands with joy.

"A boar! D'you hear, a whole boar!" the weaver was nudging the relative. "It's all your fault!"

"Can't be helped," said the relative, shrugging his shoulders.

"And why not? What are we standing about for? Let's snatch the sack away! Come on, attack!"

"Go away, go, it's our boar!" shouted the weaver, stepping forward.

"Get out, get out of here, devilish woman. These aren't your goods," said the relative, coming nearer.

His wife seized the poker again, but in the meantime Chub had crept out of the sack and stood in the middle of the hall, stretching himself like a man who has just awoken from a long sleep. The relative's wife screamed when her hands touched his coat and all of them involuntarily opened their mouths wide.

"What a fool she is; a boar she says. That's not a boar," said the relative, his eyes protruding.

"See what a man has been thrown into the sack," said the weaver, retreating in his fright. "Say what you wish till you burst, but it can't have happened without the evil spirit. He couldn't have squeezed himself through the window."

"That's my relative," exclaimed the relative, having a good look.

"And who did you think it was?" said Chub laughing. "Haven't I played a good trick on you? I bet you probably wanted to eat me instead of pork. You

wait, I'll give you a nice surprise, something is lying in the sack, even if it's not a boar, it's probably a piglet or some poultry or other. Something kept on moving under me the whole time."

The weaver and the relative rushed to the sack, the hostess of the house clawed it from the opposite side and the fight would have been resumed, if the Deacon himself, seeing that there was now nowhere for him to hide, had not scrambled out of the sack.

The relative's wife became stupefied and released her hands from the leg by which she had begun to drag the Deacon out of the sack.

"There's another in it, too," the weaver screamed with fear. "The Devil knows what the world is coming to... My head's going round... Neither sausages nor bread, but people are being thrown into the sacks."

"That's the Deacon," said Chub, who was more amazed than all the others. "'There you are! That's what you are Solokha. Puts into sacks... That's why I looked – her whole house is full of sacks... Now I know everything; in every one of her sacks two people are sitting. And I thought that I was the only one... there you have Solokha."

* * *

The girls were somewhat surprised when one sack was not to be found.

"Nothing to be done, we've enough as it is," lisped Oksana.

They all seized the sack and heaved it on to the sledge.

The Mayor decided to keep quiet. He reasoned that, if he began to shout for them to release him and untie the sack, the silly girls would run away thinking the Devil was in it and he would be left in the street, perhaps till the next day.

In the meantime the girls, all of them holding hands, flew like the wind with the sledge over the crunching snow. Many of them played about and would sit down in the sledge, others would climb even on the Mayor himself. The Mayor decided to bear everything.

At last they arrived, opened wide the doors of the sledge and of the house and, laughing, dragged in the sack.

"Let's see what's lying in it," they all shouted, rushing to untie it.

Here the hiccupping, which had not stopped tormenting the Mayor throughout his sojourn in the sack, had increased so much, that he began to hiccup and cough violently.

"Oh, there's somebody inside it," everyone began to shout, and started to

rush out of the house.

“What the devil! Where are you running like people possessed?” said Chub, entering the house,

“Ach, father,” said Oksana, “there’s somebody sitting in the sack.”

“In the sack? Where did you get the sack?”

“The blacksmith threw it in the middle of the road,” everybody said in a chorus.

“So that’s it. What did I say?” thought Chub, and said, “Why did you get frightened? Let’s have a look – Well, villain – forgive us for not addressing you by your full name – get out of the sack.”

The Mayor did.

“Ach!” screamed the girls.

“So the Mayor climbed in as well,” thought Chub to himself, nonplussed, eyeing him from head to foot, and said aloud, “That’s what it is... E!...” He could not say anything more.

The Mayor himself was not less confused and did not know how to begin.

“It’s probably cold outside?” he asked, addressing Chub.

“It’s freezing a bit,” answered Chub. “And allow me to ask you, what do you grease your boots with, would it be fat or tar?”

He did not want to say this, he wanted to ask, “How did you, Mayor, get into the sack?” and could not understand himself how he pronounced something quite different.

“Tar’s better,” said the Mayor. “Well, good-bye, Chub,” and, shoving his hood deeper on his head, left the house.

“And why did I, fool that I am, ask him what he greases his boots with?” said Chub, gazing at the door through which the Mayor had left.

“Well, well, Solokha. To put such a man into a sack!... what a devil of a woman. And I, the fool... And where is the blasted sack?”

“I threw it into a comer, there’s nothing else in it,” said Oksana.

“I know those jokes. Nothing else there!... Give it to me. There’s someone else sitting in it. Shake it well! What! There isn’t? What an accursed woman...! And to look at her – like a saint, as if she never touched meat during Lent.”

But let us leave Chub to vent his annoyance at his leisure and let us return to the blacksmith, because it is now probably nine o’clock.

* * *

At first Vakula was frightened. Especially when he rose from the ground to such a height, that he could no longer see anything beneath him and flew like a fly, under the very moon, so that if he had not bent down a little, he would have brushed it with his cap.

Nevertheless, he soon gathered courage and before long began to tease the Devil... He was highly amused by the Devil's sneezings and coughings whenever he removed the cypress wood crucifix from his neck and moved it near him. Purposely he would raise his hand to scratch his head, and the Devil, thinking that the sign of the cross was about to be made over him, flew even faster.

Everything was light, high above. The air was transparent in the light silvery mist. Everything was visible. He saw a sorcerer whizz past them riding on a pot, the stars in whirling crowds playing hide and seek, a swarm of spirits gathered in a cloud. He saw a Devil dance in the moonlight and the latter, perceiving the blacksmith galloping past, raised his cap. He saw a broom speed on its way back, having apparently just conveyed a witch to her destination... They met various other scum. Seeing the blacksmith, they all stopped for a minute to look at him and then once more resumed their former occupation.

The blacksmith flew on and on and suddenly Petersburg began to glitter before him, as if on fire. (For some reason or other Petersburg was illuminated on that occasion.) The Devil, having flown over the barrier, turned himself into a horse, and the blacksmith saw himself on a spirited steed in the middle of a street.

Heavens! What a din, roar, glitter; on both sides rose four-storied walls; the clatter of horses' hooves and of wheels echoed like thunder and resounded from all sides. The houses grew and seemed to spring up from the earth at every step. Bridges trembled, coaches flew, cabmen and postillions shouted, the snow whistled under thousands of sledges, which raced along in all directions. Under the houses, studded with lanterns, pedestrians, pressed close, appeared to be squeezed together and their huge shadows twinkled up the walls, their heads topping the chimneys and the roofs.

In amazement the blacksmith gazed around him. It seemed to him that all the houses turned their innumerable fiery eyes at him and stared. He saw so many gentlemen in fur coats covered with cloth that he did not know to whom he should raise his cap.

"My God! How many noblemen there are here!" thought the blacksmith,

“I should think everyone who crosses the street in a fur coat is at least an assessor, and those who drive about in such wonderful coaches with glass windows, if they aren’t town bailiffs they are probably tax collectors, and perhaps even more than that.”

His words were interrupted by the Devil’s question: -

“Shall I ride straight to the Empress?”

“No, I’m terrified of that,” thought the blacksmith.

“Somewhere here, I don’t quite know where, the Cossacks from Zaporozhye, who passed through Dikanka last autumn, are lodging. They travelled from Secha with some papers to the Empress. It would do no harm to consult them. Hey, Satan! Climb into my pocket and then lead me to the Cossacks from Zaporozhye.”

And in one minute the Devil dwindled and became so tiny that without any difficulty he climbed into the pocket. Vakula hardly had time to look around before he found himself in front of a big house, walked, not knowing how, up the stairs, opened the door, and fell back slightly, dazzled by the glitter of a well-furnished room. But he gathered some courage when he recognized the same Cossacks from Zaporozhye who had passed through Dikanka, now sitting cross-legged on silk couches, their boots smeared with tar and smoking the strongest tobacco, usually called koreshki.

“Greetings, Your Honors. God be praised that we meet again,” said the blacksmith, coming closer and bowing to the ground.

“Who’s this man?” asked one, seated right in front of the blacksmith, of another, who sat further away.

“Don’t you recognize me?” said the blacksmith. “It’s me, Vakula, the blacksmith. When you passed through Dikanka in the autumn – may God grant you health and long life – you were my guests for nearly two days. I then repaired the front wheel of your coach.”

“Ah!” said the same Cossack. “It’s the blacksmith who paints so well. Welcome, fellow countryman. Why has God sent you here?”

“Oh, I just wanted to have a look. They say...”

“Well, compatriot,” said the Cossack, assuming a dignified air and desiring to prove that he too could speak Russian as well as Ukrainian. “What? Big town?”

The blacksmith, too, did not want to disgrace himself and show himself a country bumpkin. Moreover, as we had occasion to see above, he himself knew the cultured tongue.

“Noble district,” he answered coolly. “Fine indeed, houses big, pictures good everywhere. Many houses written on with letter of gold leaf to extreme. Nothing to be said against it, wonderful proportion.”

When the Cossacks heard the blacksmith expressing himself so fluently, they drew a conclusion very favorable to him.

“We’ll talk to you some more later, compatriot, but now we’re off to see the Empress.”

“To the Empress? Ah, do me the favor, Your Honors, take me with you as well.”

“You?” said the Cossack, with the same expression with which a father talks to his four years old offspring who asks him to put him on a real, on a big horse. “What will you do there? No, it can’t be done.”

At this his face assumed an important expression.

“Brother, we are to talk with the Empress about our own affairs.”

“Take me!” insisted the blacksmith. “Ask!” he whispered quietly to the Devil, hitting his pocket with his fist.

Hardly had he said this when another Cossack said, “Let’s take him, brothers.”

“Perhaps we really should,” said others.

“All right then, but put on the same clothes as ours.”

The blacksmith hurriedly pulled on a green jacket, and then suddenly the door opened and a servant in galloons said that it was time to go.

Again it seemed strange to the blacksmith to be racing in a huge coach and to bounce on its springs, while on both sides four-storied houses ran past him and the thundering pavement seemed to unroll under the horses’ feet.

“My God, what a world!” thought the blacksmith. “At home it’s not as light as this even in the daytime.”

The coaches stopped before the palace. The Cossacks stepped out, entered a magnificent hall and began to ascend the brilliantly illuminated staircase.

“What a staircase!” whispered the blacksmith to himself. “It’s a shame to walk on it. What ornaments! They say fairy tales lie. The Devil they do. My God! What bannisters! What workmanship! Fifty robles’ worth of iron alone must have gone into it.”

Having scrambled up the stairs, the Cossacks passed through the first chamber. The blacksmith followed them timidly, fearful at every step of slipping on the parquet floor. They passed through three chambers, the blacksmith still did not cease to marvel. When they entered the fourth

chamber, the blacksmith involuntarily approached a picture hanging on the wall. It depicted the Holy Virgin and the Infant.

“What a picture! What wonderful painting!” he discoursed. “It seems to speak, to be alive! And the Holy Child! It presses its little hands to its heart and smiles, poor little thing! And the colors! God Almighty, what colors! There must be more than a kopek’s worth of ochre alone in it. Full of greens and reds. And how the pale blue burns! Magnificent work! The background has probably been painted with the most expensive paint. Still, amazing as this painting is, this brass handle,” he continued, approaching the door and feeling the lock, “is worthy of even greater admiration. Ek, what a pure finish! I bet it’s all been done by German blacksmiths at an enormous price...”

The blacksmith might have continued his discourse for a long time if the lackey in galloons had not nudged his arm and reminded him that he should not lag behind the others. The Cossacks crossed another two chambers and stopped. Here they were ordered to wait. The chamber was crowded with Generals in uniforms embroidered with gold. The Cossacks bowed in all directions and gathered in a group.

A minute later there entered a somewhat heavy man of imposing height, in a Hetman’s uniform and dapper yellow boots. He was followed by a whole retinue. His hair was disheveled, one eye was slightly askew. His face displayed a haughty dignity and his every movement was expressive of command. All the Generals, who had been strutting rather arrogantly in their gold uniforms, began to bustle about. Continually bowing, they endeavored to catch every word he uttered and studied his slightest movement, prepared to fly immediately to gratify his smallest wish. But the Hetman paid hardly any attention to their efforts, nodded his head briskly and went up to the Cossacks.

All the Cossacks bowed to the ground.

“Are you all here?” he asked with a drawl, pronouncing the words with a faintly nasal accent.

“Yes, father, all,” answered the Cossacks, bowing again.

“Don’t forget to speak as I taught you!”

“No, father, we won’t forget.”

“Is that the Tsar?” asked the blacksmith of one of the Cossacks.

“The Tsar! More than that! It’s Potemkin himself,” he was told.

Voices were heard from an adjoining room and the blacksmith did not

know where to look when the room was filled with a multitude of ladies in long trailing satin dresses and courtiers in gold embroidered jackets. His eyes were dazzled by the glitter and he could see nothing else.

All the Cossacks suddenly fell to the ground and began to shout in chorus, “Pardon us, mother, pardon us!”

The blacksmith, too, not knowing why, stretched himself out with all his ardor on the floor.

“Rise!” spoke above them a commanding and, at the same time, charming voice.

Some of the courtiers became agitated and began to nudge the Cossacks.

“We won’t rise, mother, we won’t. We’ll die, but we won’t rise,” shouted the Cossacks.

Potemkin was biting his lips. At last he came up himself and whispered commandingly to one of the Cossacks. The Cossacks rose.

At this the blacksmith, too, dared to raise his head and saw before him a woman of medium height, almost corpulent, powdered, blue eyed, and with an expression at once majestic and winsome, which nothing could resist and which could belong only to one reigning woman.

“His Highness promised to acquaint me with those of my people, whom I have not yet seen.” the lady with the blue eyes said, surveying the Cossacks with curiosity. “Are you well looked after here?” she continued, coming nearer.

“Yes, thank you, mother! Provisions are given good ones, although the sheep here aren’t the same as ours in Zaporozhye – why shouldn’t we live somehow?...”

Potemkin knitted his eyebrows perceiving that the Cossacks were speaking quite differently from what he had taught them...

One of the Cossacks, gathering courage, stepped forward.

“Have mercy, mother! What has your loyal people displeased you with? Have we held the hand of the vile Tartar? Have we come to any agreement with the Turks? Have we been disloyal to you in deed or thought? Why, then, are we in disfavor? First we hear that you’re ordering fortresses to be built against us everywhere. Then we hear that you want to turn us into foot-soldiers, now we hear of new disasters. What is the crime of the Cossack army? Is it because it led your forces over the Perekop and helped your generals to break the Crimeans?...”

Potemkin was silent and with a tiny brush negligently polished the

diamonds which studded his hands.

“What is it you wish then?” solicitously asked Catherine.

The Cossacks looked at each other meaningly.

“Now’s the time. The Empress asks you what you want,” said the blacksmith to himself and suddenly dropped to the ground.

“Your Royal Highness, don’t punish me by death. Pardon me! What are the shoes made of on your feet? May Your Royal Highness forgive me for asking. I should think there’s not one shoemaker in any kingdom in the world who can make them like this. My God, if only my wife could have such shoes to put on.”

The Empress laughed. The courtiers laughed, too. Potemkin knitted his eyebrows and smiled at the same time. The Cossacks began to nudge the blacksmith, wondering whether he had not gone mad.

“Rise,” said the Empress graciously. “If you wish so much to have such shoes, then it is not difficult to procure them. Bring him immediately my most expensive shoes, those with gold! Really, I am very pleased with this sincerity. Here,” continued the Empress, directing her look at a gentleman with a fat slightly pale face, who stood aside from the others and whose modest jacket with large mother-of-pearl buttons denoted that he was not to be numbered among the courtiers, “is a subject worthy of your witty pen.”

“Your Imperial Highness is too gracious. This requires at least a Lafontaine,” answered with a bow the man with the mother-of-pearl buttons.

“Upon my honor, I tell you, I am still enchanted by your ‘Brigadier.’ You read wonderfully well. However...” Turning again to the Cossacks the Empress continued: “I have heard that in your Secha nobody ever marries.”

“How’s that, mother! You know yourself a man can’t live without a wife,” answered the same Cossack who had spoken to the blacksmith, and the blacksmith was amazed to hear that this Cossack, knowing the cultured tongue so well, was talking to the Empress, as if on purpose, in the crudest dialect, usually called the peasant’s.

“Sly people,” he thought, “he probably does it on purpose.”

“We’re not monks,” continued the Cossack, “but sinful people. Like all honest Christians, we can’t resist meat in Lent. There are not few among us who have wives, only they don’t live with us in the Secha. There are such, who’ve wives in Poland, there are such who’ve wives in the Ukraine, there are such who’ve wives in Turkey.”

At that moment the shoes were brought to the blacksmith.

“My God, what ornaments!” he exclaimed joyfully, gabbing the shoes. “Your Royal Highness! How is it when with such shoes on your feet Your Honor, for example, goes skating on the ice. What must the little feet themselves be like? I’m sure they must be made of pure sugar at least.”

The Empress, who indeed had the slimmest and most delightful little feet, could not help smiling, hearing such a compliment from the lips of the naive blacksmith, who himself, in his Cossack clothes, would pass as a very handsome man despite his swarthy face.

Delighted with such gracious attention, the blacksmith was on the verge of questioning the Empress thoroughly about everything. Was it true that Tsars ate only honey and pork fat, and such like. But, feeling the Cossacks nudge him, he decided to keep quiet. And when the Empress, turning to the old men, began to ask them how they lived in the Secha, what their customs were, he slipped back, bent down to his pocket and said quietly, “Carry me out of here, quickly,” and suddenly found himself outside the city gates.

* * *

“He has drowned himself. I swear he has. May I never move from this spot if he hasn’t drowned himself,” lisped the weaver’s fat wife, standing in a crowd of Dikanka’s women, in the middle of the street.

“What, am I a liar, or what? Have I stolen anybody’s cow? Have I cast an evil spell over anybody, that there’s no trust put in me?” shouted a woman in a Cossack’s jacket, with a violent nose, waving her hands. “May I never thirst for a drink of water, if old Perepertchikha hasn’t seen with her own eyes how the blacksmith hanged himself.”

“Has the blacksmith hanged himself? You don’t say!” said the Mayor, leaving Chub’s house. He stopped and pushed nearer to the talkers.

“You’d better wish that you’ll never thirst for vodka, you old drunkard.” answered the weaver’s wife. “One has to be as mad as you to hang oneself. He’s drowned himself, drowned himself in the millstream. I know that, as well as I do that you’ve just come from the pub.”

“You hussy! See what she reproaches me with,” answered the woman with the violet nose in a rage. “She ought to keep quiet, good for nothing that she is! Don’t I know that the Deacon visits you every evening.”

The weaver’s wife turned crimson.

“What Deacon? Who does he go to? Why are you telling lies?”

“The Deacon!” cried the Deacon’s wife, who wore a fur coat of rabbit

skins, covered with blue nankeen, and pushed herself nearer to the quarrelling women. "I'll show you the Deacon! Who said the Deacon?"

"And that's the one the Deacon visits," said the woman with the violet nose, pointing to the weaver's wife.

"So it's you, you bitch," said the Deacon's wife, ready to attack the weaver's wife. "You're the witch who casts spells over him and gives him an evil potion to make him come to you!"

"Get away from me, Satan," the weaver's wife said, retreating.

"Look at the accursed witch. May she expect children and never see them! Villainess! Tphu!"

Here the Deacon's wife spat right into the weaver's wife's eyes.

The weaver's wife wanted to do the same thing herself, but, instead, spat into the unshaven beard of the Mayor, who, in order to hear everything better, had edged his way right up to the quarrelling women.

"Ach, filthy woman," the Mayor began to shout, wiping his face with his lapel and raising his whip. This movement caused everybody to scatter in all directions, swearing.

"What a filthy woman!" repeated the Mayor, continuing to wipe himself. "So the blacksmith has drowned himself! My God! and he was such a good painter! What fine knives, scythes and ploughs he could turn out! What strength he had! Yes," he continued, becoming thoughtful, "there are few such people in our village. So that's why, when I was still sitting in that blasted sack, I noticed the poor fellow was very much down in the mouth. That's the blacksmith – he was and now he is no more. And I intended to have my dappled mare shod..."

And filled with such Christian thoughts, the Mayor quietly trudged back to his house.

Oksana became confused when the news reached her. She had little trust in Perepertchikha's eyes and the women's chatter. She knew that the blacksmith was sufficiently pious not to want to destroy his soul. But what if he had really gone away with the intention of never returning to the village? She was hardly likely to find another young man like the blacksmith anywhere. He loved her so much! He put up with her tantrums longer than all the others... The beauty turned the whole night under her blanket from the right side to the left, from the left to the right, and could find no sleep. Sometimes, stretched out in enchanting nakedness, which the darkness of the night hid even from herself, she scolded herself almost aloud. At times,

quietening down, she would decide not to think about anything – and kept on thinking. And was all aglow and by morning had fallen head over heels in love with the blacksmith.

Chub expressed neither pleasure nor sorrow about Vakula's fate. His thoughts were busy with one thing only. On no account could he forget Solokha's unfaithfulness, and did not stop reproaching her even in his sleep.

Morning arrived. The church was full of people even before daylight. Elderly women, with white scarves on their heads and white cloth jackets, crossed themselves piously at the very entrance of the church. The noblewomen, in green and yellow blouses and some even in blue Polish surcoats with golden tassels at the back, stood in front of them. The girls, on whose heads were tied shopfuls of ribbons and round whose necks hung necklaces with crucifixes and ducats, tried to thread their way nearer to the altar. But in front of them all stood the noblemen and plain peasants with moustaches, tufts of hair, thick necks and freshly shaven chins, almost all in cloaks, from under which appeared a white or a blue jacket. On all faces, wherever you looked, a holyday spirit was to be seen. The Mayor licked his lips in advance, picturing how he would break his fast with sausages, the girls thought of how they would skate with the boys on the ice, the old women whispered prayers more zealously than ever before. Over the whole church Cossack Sverbiguz could be heard praying with fervor. Oksana alone stood as if in a daze. She prayed and she did not pray. So many mixed feelings were crowded in her breast, one sadder than another, one gloomier than another, that her face expressed only an intense confusion. Tears trembled in her eyes. The girls could not understand the reason for it and did not suspect that the fault was the blacksmith's. Yet Oksana was not alone in her preoccupation with Vakula. All the villagers noticed that the holiday was not quite a holiday, that something seemed to be missing. As misfortune willed it, the Deacon, after his journey in the sack, had become hoarse and bleated in a voice that was barely audible. It is true that the newly arrived chorister took the notes well with his bass, but it would have been far better had the blacksmith been there, too. He always stepped up to the choir and led them with the same melody that they sing in Poltava. Matins were already over. Then Mass was said... Really, where had the blacksmith vanished?

* * *

Throughout the rest of the night the Devil flew back with the blacksmith

even quicker than before and soon Vakula found himself near his house. At that moment the cock crowed.

“Where are you off to?” shouted the blacksmith, seizing by the tail the Devil, who wanted to rush away. “Wait, friend. We haven’t finished yet. I haven’t thanked you.”

Then, picking up a stick, he struck the Devil three times, and the poor Devil began to run like a peasant who has just been thrashed by the assessor. And so, instead of cheating, seducing and fooling others, the enemy of mankind was fooled himself.

After that Vakula entered the doorway, buried himself in the straw which lay there, and slept till midday. When he awoke, he became alarmed to find that the sun had already risen high in the sky.

“I’ve slept through Matins and Mass!”

At this the devout blacksmith became dismayed, thinking that God, in punishment for his sinful intention of destroying his soul, had probably deliberately sent him the sleep which prevented him even from attending church on such a solemn festival. Then, calming down, reassured by the thought that next week he would confess to the priest and after that would make fifty genuflections daily for a whole year, he looked into the house. Nobody was in it. Apparently Solokha had not yet returned.

Carefully he took out the shoes from inside his shirt and again wondered at the expensive workmanship and the amazing happening of the previous night. He washed himself and, dressing as carefully as possible, put on the clothes which he had obtained from the Cossacks. Then he took out of his trunk a new cap with a black lambskin band and blue top, which he had never worn since the time he bought it during his stay in Poltava, took out also a new multi-colored belt, wrapped them all, together with a leather whip, in a large scarf and departed straight to Chub.

Chub’s eyes began to protrude when the blacksmith entered, and he did not know what to marvel at most. Whether at the fact of the blacksmith’s resurrection or at his temerity in coming to him, or at his being dressed up like a dandy and a Cossack from Zaporozhye. But Chub was even more amazed when Vakula untied the scarf and, putting before him a new hat and a belt, such as had never been seen before in the village, dropped to his feet and said in an imploring voice: -

“Have mercy father! Don’t be angry with me! Here is a whip, too, for you. Whip me to your heart’s content. I surrender, repent everything. Whip

me. Only don't be angry with me. After all, you once used to be my dead father's friend. You always liked each other and you used to wet a bargain together."

Not without secret satisfaction, Chub saw that the blacksmith, who did not care a fig for anybody in the village, who could bend coins and horseshoes like pancakes with his hands, that this same blacksmith was now lying at his feet. In order not to lessen his own dignity, Chub took up the whip and struck Vakula three times on the back.

"Now, that's enough for you. Get up! Always listen to older people. Let's forget everything that stood between us. Now tell me, what do you want?"

"Father, give me Oksana."

Chub thought for a short time, looked at the cap and at the belt. The cap was wonderful, the belt no less. He remembered about the faithless Solokha, and said resolutely: -

"Alright. Send matchmakers."

"Ai," screamed Oksana, crossing the threshold and seeing the blacksmith. She fixed her eyes on him with amazement and joy.

"Look what shoes I've brought you," said Vakula. "The same ones that the Empress wears."

"No, no! I don't need any shoes," she said, waving her hand and without removing her eyes from him. "Even without the shoes I'd..."

She did not finish and blushed.

The blacksmith came nearer, took her by the hand. The girl lowered her eyes. Never had she been so wonderfully beautiful. The enraptured blacksmith quietly kissed her and her face began to glow even more, and she became even more beautiful.

* * *

The Archdeacon, blessed be his memory, travelling through Dikanka, praised the place on which the village stands. As he passed through one of the streets, he stopped before a new house.

"And whose is this house, which is so beautifully painted?" asked the Most Eminent of a beautiful woman who stood near the door with a child in her arms.

"The blacksmith Vakula's," Oksana answered, bowing, for it was Oksana herself.

"Nice, nice work," said the Most Eminent, surveying the doors and

windows. All the window frames were painted red and on the doors, everywhere, were painted Cossacks on horseback with pipes in their teeth.

But the Most Eminent praised Vakula even more, when he discovered, that in fulfilment of his penance, Vakula had, without charge, painted the whole of the left choir green with red flowers.

Still, that is not all. On the side of the wall, as you enter the church, Vakula painted a picture of the Devil in Hell, so repulsive that no one could pass it without spitting and the women, when the child in their arms would begin to cry, would hold it up to the painting and would say, "Look at the nasty picture," and the child, holding back its little tears, would gape at the picture and press closer to its mother's breast.

THE VIY

(The “Viy” is a monstrous creation of popular fancy. It is the name which the inhabitants of Little Russia give to the king of the gnomes, whose eyelashes reach to the ground. The following story is a specimen of such folk-lore. I have made no alterations, but reproduce it in the same simple form in which I heard it.-Author's Note.)

I

As soon as the clear seminary bell began sounding in Kieff in the morning, the pupils would come flocking from all parts of the town. The students of grammar, rhetoric, philosophy, and theology hastened with their books under their arms over the streets.

The “grammarians” were still mere boys. On the way they pushed against each other and quarrelled with shrill voices. Nearly all of them wore torn or dirty clothes, and their pockets were always crammed with all kinds of things—push-bones, pipes made out of pens, remains of confectionery, and sometimes even young sparrows. The latter would sometimes begin to chirp in the midst of deep silence in the school, and bring down on their possessors severe canings and thrashings.

The “rhetoricians” walked in a more orderly way. Their clothes were generally untorn, but on the other hand their faces were often strangely decorated; one had a black eye, and the lips of another resembled a single blister, etc. These spoke to each other in tenor voices.

The “philosophers” talked in a tone an octave lower; in their pockets they only had fragments of tobacco, never whole cakes of it; for what they could get hold of, they used at once. They smelt so strongly of tobacco and brandy, that a workman passing by them would often remain standing and sniffing with his nose in the air, like a hound.

About this time of day the market-place was generally full of bustle, and the market women, selling rolls, cakes, and honey-tarts, plucked the sleeves of those who wore coats of fine cloth or cotton.

“Young sir! Young sir! Here! Here!” they cried from all sides. “Rolls and cakes and tasty tarts, very delicious! I have baked them myself!”

Another drew something long and crooked out of her basket and cried, “Here is a sausage, young sir! Buy a sausage!”

“Don't buy anything from her!” cried a rival. “See how greasy she is, and what a dirty nose and hands she has!”

But the market women carefully avoided appealing to the philosophers and theologians, for these only took handfuls of eatables merely to taste them.

Arrived at the seminary, the whole crowd of students dispersed into the low, large class-rooms with small windows, broad doors, and blackened

benches. Suddenly they were filled with a many-toned murmur. The teachers heard the pupils' lessons repeated, some in shrill and others in deep voices which sounded like a distant booming. While the lessons were being said, the teachers kept a sharp eye open to see whether pieces of cake or other dainties were protruding from their pupils' pockets; if so, they were promptly confiscated.

When this learned crowd arrived somewhat earlier than usual, or when it was known that the teachers would come somewhat late, a battle would ensue, as though planned by general agreement. In this battle all had to take part, even the monitors who were appointed to look after the order and morality of the whole school. Two theologians generally arranged the conditions of the battle: whether each class should split into two sides, or whether all the pupils should divide themselves into two halves.

In each case the grammarians began the battle, and after the rhetoricians had joined in, the former retired and stood on the benches, in order to watch the fortunes of the fray. Then came the philosophers with long black moustaches, and finally the thick-necked theologians. The battle generally ended in a victory for the latter, and the philosophers retired to the different class-rooms rubbing their aching limbs, and throwing themselves on the benches to take breath.

When the teacher, who in his own time had taken part in such contests, entered the class-room he saw by the heated faces of his pupils that the battle had been very severe, and while he caned the hands of the rhetoricians, in another room another teacher did the same for the philosophers.

On Sundays and Festival Days the seminarists took puppet-theatres to the citizens' houses. Sometimes they acted a comedy, and in that case it was always a theologian who took the part of the hero or heroine-Potiphar or Herodias, etc. As a reward for their exertions, they received a piece of linen, a sack of maize, half a roast goose, or something similar. All the students, lay and clerical, were very poorly provided with means for procuring themselves necessary subsistence, but at the same time very fond of eating; so that, however much food was given to them, they were never satisfied, and the gifts bestowed by rich landowners were never adequate for their needs.

Therefore the Commissariat Committee, consisting of philosophers and theologians, sometimes dispatched the grammarians and rhetoricians under the leadership of a philosopher-themselves sometimes joining in the expedition-with sacks on their shoulders, into the town, in order to levy a

contribution on the fleshpots of the citizens, and then there was a feast in the seminary.

The most important event in the seminary year was the arrival of the holidays; these began in July, and then generally all the students went home. At that time all the roads were thronged with grammarians, rhetoricians, philosophers, and theologians. He who had no home of his own, would take up his quarters with some fellow-student's family; the philosophers and theologians looked out for tutors' posts, taught the children of rich farmers, and received for doing so a pair of new boots and sometimes also a new coat.

A whole troop of them would go off in close ranks like a regiment; they cooked their porridge in common, and encamped under the open sky. Each had a bag with him containing a shirt and a pair of socks. The theologians were especially economical; in order not to wear out their boots too quickly, they took them off and carried them on a stick over their shoulders, especially when the road was very muddy. Then they tucked up their breeches over their knees and waded bravely through the pools and puddles. Whenever they spied a village near the highway, they at once left it, approached the house which seemed the most considerable, and began with loud voices to sing a psalm. The master of the house, an old Cossack engaged in agriculture, would listen for a long time with his head propped in his hands, then with tears on his cheeks say to his wife, "What the students are singing sounds very devout; bring out some lard and anything else of the kind we have in the house."

After thus replenishing their stores, the students would continue their way. The farther they went, the smaller grew their numbers, as they dispersed to their various houses, and left those whose homes were still farther on.

On one occasion, during such a march, three students left the main-road in order to get provisions in some village, since their stock had long been exhausted. This party consisted of the theologian Khalava, the philosopher Thomas Brutus, and the rhetorician Tiberius Gorobetz.

The first was a tall youth with broad shoulders and of a peculiar character; everything which came within reach of his fingers he felt obliged to appropriate. Moreover, he was of a very melancholy disposition, and when he had got intoxicated he hid himself in the most tangled thickets so that the seminary officials had the greatest trouble in finding him.

The philosopher Thomas Brutus was a more cheerful character. He liked to lie for a long time on the same spot and smoke his pipe; and when he was

merry with wine, he hired a fiddler and danced the “tropak.” Often he got a whole quantity of “beans,” i.e. thrashings; but these he endured with complete philosophic calm, saying that a man cannot escape his destiny.

The rhetorician Tiberius Gorobetz had not yet the right to wear a moustache, to drink brandy, or to smoke tobacco. He only wore a small crop of hair, as though his character was at present too little developed. To judge by the great bumps on his forehead, with which he often appeared in the class-room, it might be expected that some day he would be a valiant fighter. Khalava and Thomas often pulled his hair as a mark of their special favour, and sent him on their errands.

Evening had already come when they left the high-road; the sun had just gone down, and the air was still heavy with the heat of the day. The theologian and the philosopher strolled along, smoking in silence, while the rhetorician struck off the heads of the thistles by the wayside with his stick. The way wound on through thick woods of oak and walnut; green hills alternated here and there with meadows. Twice already they had seen cornfields, from which they concluded that they were near some village; but an hour had already passed, and no human habitation appeared. The sky was already quite dark, and only a red gleam lingered on the western horizon.

“The deuce!” said the philosopher Thomas Brutus. “I was almost certain we would soon reach a village.”

The theologian still remained silent, looked round him, then put his pipe again between his teeth, and all three continued their way.

“Good heavens!” exclaimed the philosopher, and stood still. “Now the road itself is disappearing.”

“Perhaps we shall find a farm farther on,” answered the theologian, without taking his pipe out of his mouth.

Meanwhile the night had descended; clouds increased the darkness, and according to all appearance there was no chance of moon or stars appearing. The seminarists found that they had lost the way altogether.

After the philosopher had vainly sought for a footpath, he exclaimed, “Where have we got to?”

The theologian thought for a while, and said, “Yes, it is really dark.”

The rhetorician went on one side, lay on the ground, and groped for a path; but his hands encountered only fox-holes. All around lay a huge steppe over which no one seemed to have passed. The wanderers made several efforts to get forward, but the landscape grew wilder and more inhospitable.

The philosopher tried to shout, but his voice was lost in vacancy, no one answered; only, some moments later, they heard a faint groaning sound, like the whimpering of a wolf.

“Curse it all! What shall we do?” said the philosopher.

“Why, just stop here, and spend the night in the open air,” answered the theologian. So saying, he felt in his pocket, brought out his timber and steel, and lit his pipe.

But the philosopher could not agree with this proposal; he was not accustomed to sleep till he had first eaten five pounds of bread and five of dripping, and so he now felt an intolerable emptiness in his stomach. Besides, in spite of his cheerful temperament, he was a little afraid of the wolves.

“No, Khalava,” he said, “that won't do. To lie down like a dog and without any supper! Let us try once more; perhaps we shall find a house, and the consolation of having a glass of brandy to drink before going to sleep.”

At the word “brandy,” the theologian spat on one side and said, “Yes, of course, we cannot remain all night in the open air.”

The students went on and on, and to their great joy they heard the barking of dogs in the distance. After listening a while to see from which direction the barking came, they went on their way with new courage, and soon espied a light.

“A village, by heavens, a village!” exclaimed the philosopher.

His supposition proved correct; they soon saw two or three houses built round a court-yard. Lights glimmered in the windows, and before the fence stood a number of trees. The students looked through the crevices of the gates and saw a court-yard in which stood a large number of roving tradesmen's carts. In the sky there were now fewer clouds, and here and there a star was visible.

“See, brother!” one of them said, “we must now cry ‘halt!’ Cost what it may, we must find entrance and a night's lodging.”

The three students knocked together at the gate, and cried “Open!”

The door of one of the houses creaked on its hinges, and an old woman wrapped in a sheepskin appeared. “Who is there?” she exclaimed, coughing loudly.

“Let us spend the night here, mother; we have lost our way, our stomachs are empty, and we do not want to spend the night out of doors.”

“But what sort of people are you?”

“Quite harmless people; the theologian Khalava, the philosopher Brutus,

and the rhetorician Gorobetz.”

“It is impossible,” answered the old woman. “The whole house is full of people, and every corner occupied. Where can I put you up? You are big and heavy enough to break the house down. I know these philosophers and theologians; when once one takes them in, they eat one out of house and home. Go farther on! There is no room here for you!”

“Have pity on us, mother! How can you be so heartless? Don't let Christians perish. Put us up where you like, and if we eat up your provisions, or do any other damage, may our hands wither up, and all the punishment of heaven light on us!”

The old woman seemed a little touched. “Well,” she said after a few moments' consideration, “I will let you in; but I must put you in different rooms, for I should have no quiet if you were all together at night.”

“Do just as you like; we won't say any more about it,” answered the students.

The gates moved heavily on their hinges, and they entered the court-yard.

“Well now, mother,” said the philosopher, following the old woman, “if you had a little scrap of something! By heavens! my stomach is as empty as a drum. I have not had a bit of bread in my mouth since early this morning!”

“Didn't I say so?” replied the old woman. “There you go begging at once. But I have no food in the house, nor any fire.”

“But we will pay for everything,” continued the philosopher.

“We will pay early to-morrow in cash.”

“Go on and be content with what you get. You are fine fellows whom the devil has brought here!”

Her reply greatly depressed the philosopher Thomas; but suddenly his nose caught the odour of dried fish; he looked at the breeches of the theologian, who walked by his side, and saw a huge fish's tail sticking out of his pocket. The latter had already seized the opportunity to steal a whole fish from one of the carts standing in the court-yard. He had not done this from hunger so much as from the force of habit. He had quite forgotten the fish, and was looking about to see whether he could not find something else to appropriate. Then the philosopher put his hand in the theologian's pocket as though it were his own, and laid hold of his prize.

The old woman found a special resting-place for each student; the rhetorician she put in a shed, the theologian in an empty store-room, and the philosopher in a sheep's stall.

As soon as the philosopher was alone, he devoured the fish in a twinkling, examined the fence which enclosed the stall, kicked away a pig from a neighbouring stall, which had inquiringly inserted its nose through a crevice, and lay down on his right side to sleep like a corpse.

Then the low door opened, and the old woman came crouching into the stall.

“Well, mother, what do you want here?” asked the philosopher.

She made no answer, but came with outstretched arms towards him.

The philosopher shrank back; but she still approached, as though she wished to lay hold of him. A terrible fright seized him, for he saw the old hag's eyes sparkle in an extraordinary way. “Away with you, old witch, away with you!” he shouted. But she still stretched her hands after him.

He jumped up in order to rush out, but she placed herself before the door, fixed her glowing eyes upon him, and again approached him. The philosopher tried to push her away with his hands, but to his astonishment he found that he could neither lift his hands nor move his legs, nor utter an audible word. He only heard his heart beating, and saw the old woman approach him, place his hands crosswise on his breast, and bend his head down. Then with the agility of a cat she sprang on his shoulders, struck him on the side with a broom, and he began to run like a race-horse, carrying her on his shoulders.

All this happened with such swiftness, that the philosopher could scarcely collect his thoughts. He laid hold of his knees with both hands in order to stop his legs from running; but to his great astonishment they kept moving forward against his will, making rapid springs like a Caucasian horse.

Not till the house had been left behind them and a wide plain stretched before them, bordered on one side by a black gloomy wood, did he say to himself, “Ah! it is a witch!”

The half-moon shone pale and high in the sky. Its mild light, still more subdued by intervening clouds, fell like a transparent veil on the earth. Woods, meadows, hills, and valleys-all seemed to be sleeping with open eyes; nowhere was a breath of air stirring. The atmosphere was moist and warm; the shadows of the trees and bushes fell sharply defined on the sloping plain. Such was the night through which the philosopher Thomas Brutus sped with his strange rider.

A strange, oppressive, and yet sweet sensation took possession of his heart. He looked down and saw how the grass beneath his feet seemed to be

quite deep and far away; over it there flowed a flood of crystal-clear water, and the grassy plain looked like the bottom of a transparent sea. He saw his own image, and that of the old woman whom he carried on his back, clearly reflected in it. Then he beheld how, instead of the moon, a strange sun shone there; he heard the deep tones of bells, and saw them swinging. He saw a water-nixie rise from a bed of tall reeds; she turned to him, and her face was clearly visible, and she sang a song which penetrated his soul; then she approached him and nearly reached the surface of the water, on which she burst into laughter and again disappeared.

Did he see it or did he not see it? Was he dreaming or was he awake? But what was that below-wind or music? It sounded and drew nearer, and penetrated his soul like a song that rose and fell. "What is it?" he thought as he gazed into the depths, and still sped rapidly along.

The perspiration flowed from him in streams; he experienced simultaneously a strange feeling of oppression and delight in all his being. Often he felt as though he had no longer a heart, and pressed his hand on his breast with alarm.

Weary to death, he began to repeat all the prayers which he knew, and all the formulas of exorcism against evil spirits. Suddenly he experienced a certain relief. He felt that his pace was slackening; the witch weighed less heavily on his shoulders, and the thick herbage of the plain was again beneath his feet, with nothing especial to remark about it.

"Splendid!" thought the philosopher Thomas, and began to repeat his exorcisms in a still louder voice.

Then suddenly he wrenched himself away from under the witch, and sprang on her back in his turn. She began to run, with short, trembling steps indeed, but so rapidly that he could hardly breathe. So swiftly did she run that she hardly seemed to touch the ground. They were still on the plain, but owing to the rapidity of their flight everything seemed indistinct and confused before his eyes. He seized a stick that was lying on the ground, and began to belabour the hag with all his might. She uttered a wild cry, which at first sounded raging and threatening; then it became gradually weaker and more gentle, till at last it sounded quite low like the pleasant tones of a silver bell, so that it penetrated his innermost soul. Involuntarily the thought passed through his mind:

"Is she really an old woman?"

"Ah! I can go no farther," she said in a faint voice, and sank to the earth.

He knelt beside her, and looked in her eyes. The dawn was red in the sky, and in the distance glimmered the gilt domes of the churches of Kieff. Before him lay a beautiful maiden with thick, dishevelled hair and long eyelashes. Unconsciously she had stretched out her white, bare arms, and her tear-filled eyes gazed at the sky.

Thomas trembled like an aspen-leaf. Sympathy, and a strange feeling of excitement, and a hitherto unknown fear overpowered him. He began to run with all his might. His heart beat violently, and he could not explain to himself what a strange, new feeling had seized him. He did not wish to return to the village, but hastened towards Kieff, thinking all the way as he went of his weird, unaccountable adventure.

There were hardly any students left in the town; they were all scattered about the country, and had either taken tutors' posts or simply lived without occupation; for at the farms in Little Russia one can live comfortably and at ease without paying a farthing. The great half-decayed building in which the seminary was established was completely empty; and however much the philosopher searched in all its corners for a piece of lard and bread, he could not find even one of the hard biscuits which the seminarists were in the habit of hiding.

But the philosopher found a means of extricating himself from his difficulties by making friends with a certain young widow in the market-place who sold ribbons, etc. The same evening he found himself being stuffed with cakes and fowl; in fact it is impossible to say how many things were placed before him on a little table in an arbour shaded by cherry-trees.

Later on the same evening the philosopher was to be seen in an ale-house. He lay on a bench, smoked his pipe in his usual way, and threw the Jewish publican a gold piece. He had a jug of ale standing before him, looked on all who went in and out in a cold-blooded, self-satisfied way, and thought no more of his strange adventure.

...

About this time a report spread about that the daughter of a rich colonel, whose estate lay about fifty versts distant from Kieff, had returned home one day from a walk in a quite broken-down condition. She had scarcely enough strength to reach her father's house; now she lay dying, and had expressed a wish that for three days after her death the prayers for the dead should be recited by a Kieff seminarist named Thomas Brutus.

This fact was communicated to the philosopher by the rector of the

seminary himself, who sent for him to his room and told him that he must start at once, as a rich colonel had sent his servants and a kibitka for him. The philosopher trembled, and was seized by an uncomfortable feeling which he could not define. He had a gloomy foreboding that some evil was about to befall him. Without knowing why, he declared that he did not wish to go.

“Listen, Thomas,” said the rector, who under certain circumstances spoke very politely to his pupils; “I have no idea of asking you whether you wish to go or not. I only tell you that if you think of disobeying, I will have you so soundly flogged on the back with young birch-rods, that you need not think of having a bath for a long time.”

The philosopher scratched the back of his head, and went out silently, intending to make himself scarce at the first opportunity. Lost in thought, he descended the steep flight of steps which led to the court-yard, thickly planted with poplars; there he remained standing for a moment, and heard quite distinctly the rector giving orders in a loud voice to his steward, and to another person, probably one of the messengers sent by the colonel.

“Thank your master for the peeled barley and the eggs,” said the rector; “and tell him that as soon as the books which he mentions in his note are ready, I will send them. I have already given them to a clerk to be copied. And don't forget to remind your master that he has some excellent fish, especially prime sturgeon, in his ponds; he might send me some when he has the opportunity, as here in the market the fish are bad and dear. And you, Jantukh, give the colonel's man a glass of brandy. And mind you tie up the philosopher, or he will show you a clean pair of heels.”

“Listen to the scoundrel!” thought the philosopher. “He has smelt a rat, the long-legged stork!”

He descended into the court-yard and beheld there a kibitka, which he at first took for a barn on wheels. It was, in fact, as roomy as a kiln, so that bricks might have been made inside it. It was one of those remarkable Cracow vehicles in which Jews travelled from town to town in scores, wherever they thought they would find a market. Six stout, strong, though somewhat elderly Cossacks were standing by it. Their gold-braided coats of fine cloth showed that their master was rich and of some importance; and certain little scars testified to their valour on the battle-field.

“What can I do?” thought the philosopher. “There is no escaping one's destiny.” So he stepped up to the Cossacks and said “Good day, comrades.”

“Welcome, Mr Philosopher!” some of them answered.

“Well, I am to travel with you! It is a magnificent vehicle,” he continued as he got into it. “If there were only musicians present, one might dance in it.”

“Yes, it is a roomy carriage,” said one of the Cossacks, taking his seat by the coachman. The latter had tied a cloth round his head, as he had already found an opportunity of pawning his cap in the ale-house. The other five, with the philosopher, got into the capacious kibitka, and sat upon sacks which were filled with all sorts of articles purchased in the city.

“I should like to know,” said the philosopher, “if this equipage were laden with salt or iron, how many horses would be required to draw it?”

“Yes,” said the Cossack who sat by the coachman, after thinking a short time, “it would require a good many horses.”

After giving this satisfactory answer, the Cossack considered himself entitled to remain silent for the whole of the rest of the journey.

The philosopher would gladly have found out who the colonel was, and what sort of a character he had. He was also curious to know about his daughter, who had returned home in such a strange way and now lay dying, and whose destiny seemed to be mingled with his own; and wanted to know the sort of life that was lived in the colonel's house. But the Cossacks were probably philosophers like himself, for in answer to his inquiries they only blew clouds of tobacco and settled themselves more comfortably on their sacks.

Meanwhile, one of them addressed to the coachman on the box a brief command: “Keep your eyes open, Overko, you old sleepy-head, and when you come to the ale-house on the road to Tchukrailoff, don't forget to pull up and wake me and the other fellows if we are asleep.” Then he began to snore pretty loud. But in any case his admonition was quite superfluous; for scarcely had the enormous equipage begun to approach the aforesaid ale-house, than they all cried with one mouth “Halt! Halt!” Besides this, Overko's horse was accustomed to stop outside every inn of its own accord.

In spite of the intense July heat, they all got out and entered a low, dirty room where a Jewish innkeeper received them in a friendly way as old acquaintances. He brought in the skirt of his long coat some sausages, and laid them on the table, where, though forbidden by the Talmud, they looked very seductive. All sat down at table, and it was not long before each of the guests had an earthenware jug standing in front of him. The philosopher Thomas had to take part in the feast, and as the Little Russians when they are

intoxicated always begin to kiss each other or to weep, the whole room soon began to echo with demonstrations of affection.

“Come here, come here, Spirid, let me embrace thee!”

“Come here, Dorosch, let me press you to my heart!”

One Cossack, with a grey moustache, the eldest of them all, leant his head on his hand and began to weep bitterly because he was an orphan and alone in God's wide world. Another tall, loquacious man did his best to comfort him, saying, “Don't weep, for God's sake, don't weep! For over there-God knows best.”

The Cossack who had been addressed as Dorosch was full of curiosity, and addressed many questions to the philosopher Thomas. “I should like to know,” he said, “what you learn in your seminary; do you learn the same things as the deacon reads to us in church, or something else?”

“Don't ask,” said the consoler; “let them learn what they like. God knows what is to happen; God knows everything.”

“No, I will know,” answered Dorosch, “I will know what is written in their books; perhaps it is something quite different from that in the deacon's book.”

“O good heavens!” said the other, “why all this talk? It is God's will, and one cannot change God's arrangements.”

“But I will know everything that is written; I will enter the seminary too, by heaven I will! Do you think perhaps I could not learn? I will learn everything, everything.”

“Oh, heavens!” exclaimed the consoler, and let his head sink on the table, for he could no longer hold it upright.

The other Cossacks talked about the nobility, and why there was a moon in the sky.

When the philosopher Thomas saw the state they were in, he determined to profit by it, and to make his escape. In the first place he turned to the grey-headed Cossack, who was lamenting the loss of his parents. “But, little uncle,” he said to him, “why do you weep so? I too am an orphan! Let me go, children; why do you want me?”

“Let him go!” said some of them, “he is an orphan, let him go where he likes.”

They were about to take him outside themselves, when the one who had displayed a special thirst for knowledge, stopped them, saying, “No, I want to talk with him about the seminary; I am going to the seminary myself.”

Moreover, it was not yet certain whether the philosopher could have executed his project of flight, for when he tried to rise from his chair, he felt as though his feet were made of wood, and he began to see such a number of doors leading out of the room that it would have been difficult for him to have found the right one.

It was not till evening that the company remembered that they must continue their journey. They crowded into the kibitka, whipped up the horses, and struck up a song, the words and sense of which were hard to understand. During a great part of the night, they wandered about, having lost the road which they ought to have been able to find blindfolded. At last they drove down a steep descent into a valley, and the philosopher noticed, by the sides of the road, hedges, behind which he caught glimpses of small trees and house-roofs. All these belonged to the colonel's estate.

It was already long past midnight. The sky was dark, though little stars glimmered here and there; no light was to be seen in any of the houses. They drove into a large court-yard, while the dogs barked. On all sides were barns and cottages with thatched roofs. Just opposite the gateway was a house, which was larger than the others, and seemed to be the colonel's dwelling. The kibitka stopped before a small barn, and the travellers hastened into it and laid themselves down to sleep. The philosopher however attempted to look at the exterior of the house, but, rub his eyes as he might, he could distinguish nothing; the house seemed to turn into a bear, and the chimney into the rector of the seminary. Then he gave it up and lay down to sleep.

When he woke up the next morning, the whole house was in commotion; the young lady had died during the night. The servants ran hither and thither in a distracted state; the old women wept and lamented; and a number of curious people gazed through the enclosure into the court-yard, as though there were something special to be seen. The philosopher began now to inspect the locality and the buildings, which he had not been able to do during the night.

The colonel's house was one of those low, small buildings, such as used formerly to be constructed in Russia. It was thatched with straw; a small, high-peaked gable, with a window shaped like an eye, was painted all over with blue and yellow flowers and red crescent-moons; it rested on little oaken pillars, which were round above the middle, hexagonal below, and whose capitals were adorned with quaint carvings. Under this gable was a small staircase with seats at the foot of it on either side.

The walls of the house were supported by similar pillars. Before the house stood a large pear-tree of pyramidal shape, whose leaves incessantly trembled. A double row of buildings formed a broad street leading up to the colonel's house. Behind the barns near the entrance-gate stood two three-cornered wine-houses, also thatched with straw; each of the stone walls had a door in it, and was covered with all kinds of paintings. On one was represented a Cossack sitting on a barrel and swinging a large pitcher over his head; it bore the inscription "I will drink all that!" Elsewhere were painted large and small bottles, a beautiful girl, a running horse, a pipe, and a drum bearing the words "Wine is the Cossack's joy."

In the loft of one of the barns one saw through a huge round window a drum and some trumpets. At the gate there stood two cannons. All this showed that the colonel loved a cheerful life, and the whole place often rang with sounds of merriment. Before the gate were two windmills, and behind the house gardens sloped away; through the tree-tops the dark chimneys of the peasants' houses were visible. The whole village lay on a broad, even plateau, in the middle of a mountain-slope which culminated in a steep summit on the north side. When seen from below, it looked still steeper. Here and there on the top the irregular stems of the thick steppe-brooms showed in dark relief against the blue sky. The bare clay soil made a melancholy impression, worn as it was into deep furrows by rain-water. On the same slope there stood two cottages, and over one of them a huge apple-tree spread its branches; the roots were supported by small props, whose interstices were filled with mould. The apples, which were blown off by the wind, rolled down to the court-yard below. A road wound round the mountain to the village.

When the philosopher looked at this steep slope, and remembered his journey of the night before, he came to the conclusion that either the colonel's horses were very sagacious, or that the Cossacks must have very strong heads, as they ventured, even when the worse for drink, on such a road with the huge kибitka.

When the philosopher turned and looked in the opposite direction, he saw quite another picture. The village reached down to the plain; meadows stretched away to an immense distance, their bright green growing gradually dark; far away, about twenty versts off, many other villages were visible. To the right of these meadows were chains of hills, and in the remote distance one saw the Dnieper shimmer and sparkle like a mirror of steel.

“What a splendid country!” said the philosopher to himself. “It must be fine to live here! One could catch fish in the Dnieper, and in the ponds, and shoot and snare partridges and bustards; there must be quantities here. Much fruit might be dried here and sold in the town, or, better still, brandy might be distilled from it, for fruit-brandy is the best of all. But what prevents me thinking of my escape after all?”

Behind the hedge he saw a little path which was almost entirely concealed by the high grass of the steppe. The philosopher approached it mechanically, meaning at first to walk a little along it unobserved, and then quite quietly to gain the open country behind the peasants' houses. Suddenly he felt the pressure of a fairly heavy hand on his shoulder.

Behind him stood the same old Cossack who yesterday had so bitterly lamented the death of his father and mother, and his own loneliness. “You are giving yourself useless trouble, Mr Philosopher, if you think you can escape from us,” he said. “One cannot run away here; and besides, the roads are too bad for walkers. Come to the colonel; he has been waiting for you for some time in his room.”

“Yes, of course! What are you talking about? I will come with the greatest pleasure,” said the philosopher, and followed the Cossack.

The colonel was an elderly man; his moustache was grey, and his face wore the signs of deep sadness. He sat in his room by a table, with his head propped on both hands. He seemed about five-and-fifty, but his attitude of utter despair, and the pallor on his face, showed that his heart had been suddenly broken, and that all his former cheerfulness had for ever disappeared.

When Thomas entered with the Cossack, he answered their deep bows with a slight inclination of the head.

“Who are you, whence do you come, and what is your profession, my good man?” asked the colonel in an even voice, neither friendly nor austere.

“I am a student of philosophy; my name is Thomas Brutus.”

“And who was your father?”

“I don't know, sir.”

“And your mother?”

“I don't know either; I know that I must have had a mother, but who she was, and where she lived, by heavens, I do not know.”

The colonel was silent, and seemed for a moment lost in thought. “Where did you come to know my daughter?”

“I do not know her, gracious sir; I declare I do not know her.”

“Why then has she chosen you, and no one else, to offer up prayers for her?”

The philosopher shrugged his shoulders. “God only knows. It is a well-known fact that grand people often demand things which the most learned man cannot comprehend; and does not the proverb say, ‘Dance, devil, as the Lord commands!’”

“Aren't you talking nonsense, Mr Philosopher?”

“May the lightning strike me on the spot if I lie.”

“If she had only lived a moment longer,” said the colonel sadly, “then I had certainly found out everything. She said, ‘Let no one offer up prayers for me, but send, father, at once to the seminary in Kieff for the student Thomas Brutus; he shall pray three nights running for my sinful soul-he knows.’ But what he really knows she never said. The poor dove could speak no more, and died. Good man, you are probably well known for your sanctity and devout life, and she has perhaps heard of you.”

“What? Of me?” said the philosopher, and took a step backward in amazement. “I and sanctity!” he exclaimed, and stared at the colonel. “God help us, gracious sir! What are you saying? It was only last Holy Thursday that I paid a visit to the tart-shop.”

“Well, she must at any rate have had some reason for making the arrangement, and you must begin your duties to-day.”

“I should like to remark to your honour-naturally everyone who knows the Holy Scripture at all can in his measure-but I believe it would be better on this occasion to send for a deacon or subdeacon. They are learned people, and they know exactly what is to be done. I have not got a good voice, nor any official standing.”

“You may say what you like, but I shall carry out all my dove's wishes. If you read the prayers for her three nights through in the proper way, I will reward you; and if not-I advise the devil himself not to oppose me!”

The colonel spoke the last words in such an emphatic way that the philosopher quite understood them.

“Follow me!” said the colonel.

They went into the hall. The colonel opened a door which was opposite his own. The philosopher remained for a few minutes in the hall in order to look about him; then he stepped over the threshold with a certain nervousness.

The whole floor of the room was covered with red cloth. In a corner under the icons of the saints, on a table covered with a gold-bordered, velvet cloth, lay the body of the girl. Tall candles, round which were wound branches of the “calina,” stood at her head and feet, and burned dimly in the broad daylight. The face of the dead was not to be seen, as the inconsolable father sat before his daughter, with his back turned to the philosopher. The words which the latter overheard filled him with a certain fear:

“I do not mourn, my daughter, that in the flower of your age you have prematurely left the earth, to my grief; but I mourn, my dove, that I do not know my deadly enemy who caused your death. Had I only known that anyone could even conceive the idea of insulting you, or of speaking a disrespectful word to you, I swear by heaven he would never have seen his children again, if he had been as old as myself; nor his father and mother, if he had been young. And I would have thrown his corpse to the birds of the air, and the wild beasts of the steppe. But woe is me, my flower, my dove, my light! I will spend the remainder of my life without joy, and wipe the bitter tears which flow out of my old eyes, while my enemy will rejoice and laugh in secret over the helpless old man!”

He paused, overpowered by grief, and streams of tears flowed down his cheeks.

The philosopher was deeply affected by the sight of such inconsolable sorrow. He coughed gently in order to clear his throat. The colonel turned and signed to him to take his place at the head of the dead girl, before a little prayer-desk on which some books lay.

“I can manage to hold out for three nights,” thought the philosopher; “and then the colonel will fill both my pockets with ducats.”

He approached the dead girl, and after coughing once more, began to read, without paying attention to anything else, and firmly resolved not to look at her face.

Soon there was deep silence, and he saw that the colonel had left the room. Slowly he turned his head in order to look at the corpse. A violent shudder thrilled through him; before him lay a form of such beauty as is seldom seen upon earth. It seemed to him that never in a single face had so much intensity of expression and harmony of feature been united. Her brow, soft as snow and pure as silver, seemed to be thinking; the fine, regular eyebrows shadowed proudly the closed eyes, whose lashes gently rested on her cheeks, which seemed to glow with secret longing; her lips still appeared

to smile. But at the same time he saw something in these features which appalled him; a terrible depression seized his heart, as when in the midst of dance and song someone begins to chant a dirge. He felt as though those ruby lips were coloured with his own heart's blood. Moreover, her face seemed dreadfully familiar.

“The witch!” he cried out in a voice which sounded strange to himself; then he turned away and began to read the prayers with white cheeks. It was the witch whom he had killed.

II

When the sun had sunk below the horizon, the corpse was carried into the church. The philosopher supported one corner of the black-draped coffin upon his shoulder, and felt an ice-cold shiver run through his body. The colonel walked in front of him, with his right hand resting on the edge of the coffin.

The wooden church, black with age and overgrown with green lichen, stood quite at the end of the village in gloomy solitude; it was adorned with three round cupolas. One saw at the first glance that it had not been used for divine worship for a long time.

Lighted candles were standing before almost every icon. The coffin was set down before the altar. The old colonel kissed his dead daughter once more, and then left the church, together with the bearers of the bier, after he had ordered his servants to look after the philosopher and to take him back to the church after supper.

The coffin-bearers, when they returned to the house, all laid their hands on the stove. This custom is always observed in Little Russia by those who have seen a corpse.

The hunger which the philosopher now began to feel caused him for a while to forget the dead girl altogether. Gradually all the domestics of the house assembled in the kitchen; it was really a kind of club, where they were accustomed to gather. Even the dogs came to the door, wagging their tails in order to have bones and offal thrown to them.

If a servant was sent on an errand, he always found his way into the kitchen to rest there for a while, and to smoke a pipe. All the Cossacks of the establishment lay here during the whole day on and under the benches-in fact, wherever a place could be found to lie down in. Moreover, everyone was always leaving something behind in the kitchen-his cap, or his whip, or something of the sort. But the numbers of the club were not complete till the evening, when the groom came in after tying up his horses in the stable, the cowherd had shut up his cows in their stalls, and others collected there who were not usually seen in the day-time. During supper-time even the tongues of the laziest were set in motion. They talked of all and everything-of the new pair of breeches which someone had ordered for himself, of what might be in the centre of the earth, and of the wolf which someone had seen. There were

a number of wits in the company-a class which is always represented in Little Russia.

The philosopher took his place with the rest in the great circle which sat round the kitchen door in the open-air. Soon an old woman with a red cap issued from it, bearing with both hands a large vessel full of hot "galuchkis," which she distributed among them. Each drew out of his pocket a wooden spoon, or a one-pronged wooden fork. As soon as their jaws began to move a little more slowly, and their wolfish hunger was somewhat appeased, they began to talk. The conversation, as might be expected, turned on the dead girl.

"Is it true," said a young shepherd, "is it true-though I cannot understand it-that our young mistress had traffic with evil spirits?"

"Who, the young lady?" answered Dorosch, whose acquaintance the philosopher had already made in the kibitka. "Yes, she was a regular witch! I can swear that she was a witch!"

"Hold your tongue, Dorosch!" exclaimed another-the one who, during the journey, had played the part of a consoler. "We have nothing to do with that. May God be merciful to her! One ought not to talk of such things."

But Dorosch was not at all inclined to be silent; he had just visited the wine-cellar with the steward on important business, and having stooped two or three times over one or two casks, he had returned in a very cheerful and loquacious mood.

"Why do you ask me to be silent?" he answered. "She has ridden on my own shoulders, I swear she has."

"Say, uncle," asked the young shepherd, "are there signs by which to recognise a sorceress?"

"No, there are not," answered Dorosch; "even if you knew the Psalter by heart, you could not recognise one."

"Yes, Dorosch, it is possible; don't talk such nonsense," retorted the former consoler. "It is not for nothing that God has given each some special peculiarity; the learned maintain that every witch has a little tail."

"Every old woman is a witch," said a grey-headed Cossack quite seriously.

"Yes, you are a fine lot," retorted the old woman who entered at that moment with a vessel full of fresh "galuchkis." "You are great fat pigs!"

A self-satisfied smile played round the lips of the old Cossack whose name was Javtuch, when he found that his remark had touched the old

woman on a tender point. The shepherd burst into such a deep and loud explosion of laughter as if two oxen were lowing together.

This conversation excited in the philosopher a great curiosity, and a wish to obtain more exact information regarding the colonel's daughter. In order to lead the talk back to the subject, he turned to his next neighbour and said, "I should like to know why all the people here think that the young lady was a witch. Has she done harm to anyone, or killed them by witchcraft?"

"Yes, there are reports of that kind," answered a man, whose face was as flat as a shovel. "Who does not remember the huntsman Mikita, or the—"

"What has the huntsman Mikita got to do with it?" asked the philosopher.

"Stop; I will tell you the story of Mikita," interrupted Dorosch.

"No, I will tell it," said the groom, "for he was my godfather."

"I will tell the story of Mikita," said Spirid.

"Yes, yes, Spirid shall tell it," exclaimed the whole company; and Spirid began.

"You, Mr Philosopher Thomas, did not know Mikita. Ah! he was an extraordinary man. He knew every dog as though he were his own father. The present huntsman, Mikola, who sits three places away from me, is not fit to hold a candle to him, though good enough in his way; but compared to Mikita, he is a mere milksop."

"You tell the tale splendidly," exclaimed Dorosch, and nodded as a sign of approval.

Spirid continued.

"He saw a hare in the field quicker than you can take a pinch of snuff. He only needed to whistle 'Come here, Rasboy! Come here, Bosdraja!' and flew away on his horse like the wind, so that you could not say whether he went quicker than the dog or the dog than he. He could empty a quart pot of brandy in the twinkling of an eye. Ah! he was a splendid huntsman, only for some time he always had his eyes fixed on the young lady. Either he had fallen in love with her or she had bewitched him—in short, he went to the dogs. He became a regular old woman; yes, he became the devil knows what—it is not fitting to relate it."

"Very good," remarked Dorosch.

"If the young lady only looked at him, he let the reins slip out of his hands, called Bravko instead of Rasboy, stumbled, and made all kinds of mistakes. One day when he was currycombing a horse, the young lady came to him in the stable. 'Listen, Mikita,' she said. 'I should like for once to set

my foot on you.' And he, the booby, was quite delighted, and answered, 'Don't only set your foot there, but sit on me altogether.' The young lady lifted her white little foot, and as soon as he saw it, his delight robbed him of his senses. He bowed his neck, the idiot, took her feet in both hands, and began to trot about like a horse all over the place. Whither they went he could not say; he returned more dead than alive, and from that time he wasted away and became as dry as a chip of wood. At last someone coming into the stable one day found instead of him only a handful of ashes and an empty jug; he had burned completely out. But it must be said he was a huntsman such as the world cannot match."

When Spirid had ended his tale, they all began to vie with one another in praising the deceased huntsman.

"And have you heard the story of Cheptchicha?" asked Dorosch, turning to Thomas.

"No."

"Ha! Ha! One sees they don't teach you much in your seminary. Well, listen. We have here in our village a Cossack called Cheptoun, a fine fellow. Sometimes indeed he amuses himself by stealing and lying without any reason; but he is a fine fellow for all that. His house is not far away from here. One evening, just about this time, Cheptoun and his wife went to bed after they had finished their day's work. Since it was fine weather, Cheptchicha went to sleep in the court-yard, and Cheptoun in the house-no! I mean Cheptchicha went to sleep in the house on a bench and Cheptoun outside--"

"No, Cheptchicha didn't go to sleep on a bench, but on the ground," interrupted the old woman who stood at the door.

Dorosch looked at her, then at the ground, then again at her, and said after a pause, "If I tore your dress off your back before all these people, it wouldn't look pretty."

The rebuke was effectual. The old woman was silent, and did not interrupt again.

Dorosch continued.

"In the cradle which hung in the middle of the room lay a one-year-old child. I do not know whether it was a boy or a girl. Cheptchicha had lain down, and heard on the other side of the door a dog scratching and howling loud enough to frighten anyone. She was afraid, for women are such simple folk that if one puts out one's tongue at them behind the door in the dark, their

hearts sink into their boots. 'But,' she thought to herself, 'I must give this cursed dog one on the snout to stop his howling!' So she seized the poker and opened the door. But hardly had she done so than the dog rushed between her legs straight to the cradle. Then Cheptchicha saw that it was not a dog but the young lady; and if it had only been the young lady as she knew her it wouldn't have mattered, but she looked quite blue, and her eyes sparkled like fiery coals. She seized the child, bit its throat, and began to suck its blood. Cheptchicha shrieked, 'Ah! my darling child!' and rushed out of the room. Then she saw that the house-door was shut and rushed up to the attic and sat there, the stupid woman, trembling all over. Then the young lady came after her and bit her too, poor fool! The next morning Cheptoun carried his wife, all bitten and wounded, down from the attic, and the next day she died. Such strange things happen in the world. One may wear fine clothes, but that does not matter; a witch is and remains a witch."

After telling his story, Dorosch looked around him with a complacent air, and cleaned out his pipe with his little finger in order to fill it again. The story of the witch had made a deep impression on all, and each of them had something to say about her. One had seen her come to the door of his house in the form of a hayrick; from others she had stolen their caps or their pipes; she had cut off the hair-plaits of many girls in the village, and drunk whole pints of the blood of others.

At last the whole company observed that they had gossiped over their time, for it was already night. All looked for a sleeping place-some in the kitchen and others in the barn or the court-yard.

"Now, Mr Thomas, it is time that we go to the dead," said the grey-headed Cossack, turning to the philosopher. All four-Spirid, Dorosch, the old Cossack, and the philosopher-betook themselves to the church, keeping off with their whips the wild dogs who roamed about the roads in great numbers and bit the sticks of passers-by in sheer malice.

Although the philosopher had seized the opportunity of fortifying himself beforehand with a stiff glass of brandy, yet he felt a certain secret fear which increased as he approached the church, which was lit up within. The strange tales he had heard had made a deep impression on his imagination. They had passed the thick hedges and trees, and the country became more open. At last they reached the small enclosure round the church; behind it there were no more trees, but a huge, empty plain dimly visible in the darkness. The three Cossacks ascended the steep steps with Thomas, and entered the church. Here

they left the philosopher, expressing their hope that he would successfully accomplish his duties, and locked him in as their master had ordered.

He was left alone. At first he yawned, then he stretched himself, blew on both hands, and finally looked round him. In the middle of the church stood the black bier; before the dark pictures of saints burned the candles, whose light only illuminated the icons, and cast a faint glimmer into the body of the church; all the corners were in complete darkness. The lofty icons seemed to be of considerable age; only a little of the original gilt remained on their broken traceries; the faces of the saints had become quite black and looked uncanny.

Once more the philosopher cast a glance around him. "Bother it!" said he to himself. "What is there to be afraid about? No living creature can get in, and as for the dead and those who come from the 'other side,' I can protect myself with such effectual prayers that they cannot touch me with the tips of their fingers. There is nothing to fear," he repeated, swinging his arms. "Let us begin the prayers!"

As he approached one of the side-aisles, he noticed two packets of candles which had been placed there.

"That is fine," he thought. "I must illuminate the whole church, till it is as bright as day. What a pity that one cannot smoke in it."

He began to light the candles on all the wall-brackets and all the candelabra, as well as those already burning before the holy pictures; soon the whole church was brilliantly lit up. Only the darkness in the roof above seemed still denser by contrast, and the faces of the saints peering out of the frames looked as unearthly as before. He approached the bier, looked nervously at the face of the dead girl, could not help shuddering slightly, and involuntarily closed his eyes. What terrible and extraordinary beauty!

He turned away and tried to go to one side, but the strange curiosity and peculiar fascination which men feel in moments of fear, compelled him to look again and again, though with a similar shudder. And in truth there was something terrible about the beauty of the dead girl. Perhaps she would not have inspired so much fear had she been less beautiful; but there was nothing ghastly or deathlike in the face, which wore rather an expression of life, and it seemed to the philosopher as though she were watching him from under her closed eyelids. He even thought he saw a tear roll from under the eyelash of her right eye, but when it was half-way down her cheek, he saw that it was a drop of blood.

He quickly went into one of the stalls, opened his book, and began to read the prayers in a very loud voice in order to keep up his courage. His deep voice sounded strange to himself in the grave-like silence; it aroused no echo in the silent and desolate wooden walls of the church.

“What is there to be afraid of?” he thought to himself. “She will not rise from her bier, since she fears God's word. She will remain quietly resting. Yes, and what sort of a Cossack should I be, if I were afraid? The fact is, I have drunk a little too much—that is why I feel so queer. Let me take a pinch of snuff. It is really excellent—first-rate!”

At the same time he cast a furtive glance over the pages of the prayer-book towards the bier, and involuntarily he said to himself, “There! See! She is getting up! Her head is already above the edge of the coffin!”

But a death-like silence prevailed; the coffin was motionless, and all the candles shone steadily. It was an awe-inspiring sight, this church lit up at midnight, with the corpse in the midst, and no living soul near but one. The philosopher began to sing in various keys in order to stifle his fears, but every moment he glanced across at the coffin, and involuntarily the question came to his lips, “Suppose she rose up after all?”

But the coffin did not move. Nowhere was there the slightest sound nor stir. Not even did a cricket chirp in any corner. There was nothing audible but the slight sputtering of some distant candle, or the faint fall of a drop of wax.

“Suppose she rose up after all?”

He raised his head. Then he looked round him wildly and rubbed his eyes. Yes, she was no longer lying in the coffin, but sitting upright. He turned away his eyes, but at once looked again, terrified, at the coffin. She stood up; then she walked with closed eyes through the church, stretching out her arms as though she wanted to seize someone.

She now came straight towards him. Full of alarm, he traced with his finger a circle round himself; then in a loud voice he began to recite the prayers and formulas of exorcism which he had learnt from a monk who had often seen witches and evil spirits.

She had almost reached the edge of the circle which he had traced; but it was evident that she had not the power to enter it. Her face wore a bluish tint like that of one who has been several days dead.

Thomas had not the courage to look at her, so terrible was her appearance; her teeth chattered and she opened her dead eyes, but as in her rage she saw nothing, she turned in another direction and felt with

outstretched arms among the pillars and corners of the church in the hope of seizing him.

At last she stood still, made a threatening gesture, and then lay down again in the coffin.

The philosopher could not recover his self-possession, and kept on gazing anxiously at it. Suddenly it rose from its place and began hurtling about the church with a whizzing sound. At one time it was almost directly over his head; but the philosopher observed that it could not pass over the area of his charmed circle, so he kept on repeating his formulas of exorcism. The coffin now fell with a crash in the middle of the church, and remained lying there motionless. The corpse rose again; it had now a greenish-blue colour, but at the same moment the distant crowing of a cock was audible, and it lay down again.

The philosopher's heart beat violently, and the perspiration poured in streams from his face; but heartened by the crowing of the cock, he rapidly repeated the prayers.

As the first light of dawn looked through the windows, there came a deacon and the grey-haired Javtuk, who acted as sacristan, in order to release him. When he had reached the house, he could not sleep for a long time; but at last weariness overpowered him, and he slept till noon. When he awoke, his experiences of the night appeared to him like a dream. He was given a quart of brandy to strengthen him.

At table he was again talkative and ate a fairly large sucking pig almost without assistance. But none the less he resolved to say nothing of what he had seen, and to all curious questions only returned the answer, "Yes, some wonderful things happened."

The philosopher was one of those men who, when they have had a good meal, are uncommonly amiable. He lay down on a bench, with his pipe in his mouth, looked blandly at all, and expectorated every minute.

But as the evening approached, he became more and more pensive. About supper-time nearly the whole company had assembled in order to play "krapli." This is a kind of game of skittles, in which, instead of bowls, long staves are used, and the winner has the right to ride on the back of his opponent. It provided the spectators with much amusement; sometimes the groom, a huge man, would clamber on the back of the swineherd, who was slim and short and shrunken; another time the groom would present his own back, while Dorosch sprang on it shouting, "What a regular ox!" Those of the

company who were more staid sat by the threshold of the kitchen. They looked uncommonly serious, smoked their pipes, and did not even smile when the younger ones went into fits of laughter over some joke of the groom or Spirid.

Thomas vainly attempted to take part in the game; a gloomy thought was firmly fixed like a nail in his head. In spite of his desperate efforts to appear cheerful after supper, fear had overmastered his whole being, and it increased with the growing darkness.

“Now it is time for us to go, Mr Student!” said the grey-haired Cossack, and stood up with Dorosch. “Let us betake ourselves to our work.”

Thomas was conducted to the church in the same way as on the previous evening; again he was left alone, and the door was bolted behind him.

As soon as he found himself alone, he began to feel in the grip of his fears. He again saw the dark pictures of the saints in their gilt frames, and the black coffin, which stood menacing and silent in the middle of the church.

“Never mind!” he said to himself. “I am over the first shock. The first time I was frightened, but I am not so at all now-no, not at all!”

He quickly went into a stall, drew a circle round him with his finger, uttered some prayers and formulas for exorcism, and then began to read the prayers for the dead in a loud voice and with the fixed resolution not to look up from the book nor take notice of anything.

He did so for an hour, and began to grow a little tired; he cleared his throat and drew his snuff-box out of his pocket, but before he had taken a pinch he looked nervously towards the coffin.

A sudden chill shot through him. The witch was already standing before him on the edge of the circle, and had fastened her green eyes upon him. He shuddered, looked down at the book, and began to read his prayers and exorcisms aloud. Yet all the while he was aware how her teeth chattered, and how she stretched out her arms to seize him. But when he cast a hasty glance towards her, he saw that she was not looking in his direction, and it was clear that she could not see him.

Then she began to murmur in an undertone, and terrible words escaped her lips-words that sounded like the bubbling of boiling pitch. The philosopher did not know their meaning, but he knew that they signified something terrible, and were intended to counteract his exorcisms.

After she had spoken, a stormy wind arose in the church, and there was a noise like the rushing of many birds. He heard the noise of their wings and

claws as they flapped against and scratched at the iron bars of the church windows. There were also violent blows on the church door, as if someone were trying to break it in pieces.

The philosopher's heart beat violently; he did not dare to look up, but continued to read the prayers without a pause. At last there was heard in the distance the shrill sound of a cock's crow. The exhausted philosopher stopped and gave a great sigh of relief.

Those who came to release him found him more dead than alive; he had leant his back against the wall, and stood motionless, regarding them without any expression in his eyes. They were obliged almost to carry him to the house; he then shook himself, asked for and drank a quart of brandy. He passed his hand through his hair and said, "There are all sorts of horrors in the world, and such dreadful things happen that—" Here he made a gesture as though to ward off something. All who heard him bent their heads forward in curiosity. Even a small boy, who ran on everyone's errands, stood by with his mouth wide open.

Just then a young woman in a close-fitting dress passed by. She was the old cook's assistant, and very coquettish; she always stuck something in her bodice by way of ornament, a ribbon or a flower, or even a piece of paper if she could find nothing else.

"Good day, Thomas," she said, as she saw the philosopher. "Dear me! what has happened to you?" she exclaimed, striking her hands together.

"Well, what is it, you silly creature?"

"Good heavens! You have grown quite grey!"

"Yes, so he has!" said Spirid, regarding him more closely. "You have grown as grey as our old Javtuk."

When the philosopher heard that, he hastened into the kitchen, where he had noticed on the wall a dirty, three-cornered piece of looking-glass. In front of it hung some forget-me-nots, evergreens, and a small garland—a proof that it was the toilette-glass of the young coquette. With alarm he saw that it actually was as they had said—his hair was quite grizzled.

He sank into a reverie; at last he said to himself, "I will go to the colonel, tell him all, and declare that I will read no more prayers. He must send me back at once to Kieff." With this intention he turned towards the door-steps of the colonel's house.

The colonel was sitting motionless in his room; his face displayed the same hopeless grief which Thomas had observed on it on his first arrival,

only the hollows in his cheeks had deepened. It was obvious that he took very little or no food. A strange paleness made him look almost as though made of marble.

“Good day,” he said as he observed Thomas standing, cap in hand, at the door. “Well, how are you getting on? All right?”

“Yes, sir, all right! Such hellish things are going on, that one would like to rush away as far as one's feet can carry one.”

“How so?”

“Your daughter, sir... When one considers the matter, she is, of course, of noble descent-no one can dispute that; but don't be angry, and may God grant her eternal rest!”

“Very well! What about her?”

“She is in league with the devil. She inspires one with such dread that all prayers are useless.”

“Pray! Pray! It was not for nothing that she sent for you. My dove was troubled about her salvation, and wished to expel all evil influences by means of prayer.”

“I swear, gracious sir, it is beyond my power.”

“Pray! Pray!” continued the colonel in the same persuasive tone. “There is only one night more; you are doing a Christian work, and I will reward you richly.”

“However great your rewards may be, I will not read the prayers any more, sir,” said Thomas in a tone of decision.

“Listen, philosopher!” said the colonel with a menacing air. “I will not allow any objections. In your seminary you may act as you like, but here it won't do. If I have you knouted, it will be somewhat different to the rector's canings. Do you know what a strong ‘kantchuk’(2) is?”

“Of course I do,” said the philosopher in a low voice; “a number of them together are insupportable.”

“Yes, I think so too. But you don't know yet how hot my fellows can make it,” replied the colonel threateningly. He sprang up, and his face assumed a fierce, despotic expression, betraying the savagery of his nature, which had been only temporarily modified by grief. “After the first flogging they pour on brandy and then repeat it. Go away and finish your work. If you don't obey, you won't be able to stand again, and if you do, you will get a thousand ducats.”

“That is a devil of a fellow,” thought the philosopher to himself, and went

out. "One can't trifle with him. But wait a little, my friend; I will escape you so cleverly, that even your hounds can't find me!"

He determined, under any circumstances, to run away, and only waited till the hour after dinner arrived, when all the servants were accustomed to take a nap on the hay in the barn, and to snore and puff so loudly that it sounded as if machinery had been set up there. At last the time came. Even Javtuch stretched himself out in the sun and closed his eyes. Tremblingly, and on tiptoe, the philosopher stole softly into the garden, whence he thought he could escape more easily into the open country. This garden was generally so choked up with weeds that it seemed admirably adapted for such an attempt. With the exception of a single path used by the people of the house, the whole of it was covered with cherry-trees, elder-bushes, and tall heath-thistles with fibrous red buds. All these trees and bushes had been thickly overgrown with ivy, which formed a kind of roof. Its tendrils reached to the hedge and fell down on the other side in snake-like curves among the small, wild field-flowers. Behind the hedge which bordered the garden was a dense mass of wild heather, in which it did not seem probable that anyone would care to venture himself, and the strong, stubborn stems of which seemed likely to baffle any attempt to cut them.

As the philosopher was about to climb over the hedge, his teeth chattered, and his heart beat so violently that he felt frightened at it. The skirts of his long cloak seemed to cling to the ground as though they had been fastened to it by pegs. When he had actually got over the hedge he seemed to hear a shrill voice crying behind him "Whither? Whither?"

He jumped into the heather and began to run, stumbling over old roots and treading on unfortunate moles. When he had emerged from the heather he saw that he still had a wide field to cross, behind which was a thick, thorny underwood. This, according to his calculation, must stretch as far as the road leading to Kieff, and if he reached it he would be safe. Accordingly he ran over the field and plunged into the thorny copse. Every sharp thorn he encountered tore a fragment from his coat. Then he reached a small open space; in the centre of it stood a willow, whose branches hung down to the earth, and close by flowed a clear spring bright as silver. The first thing the philosopher did was to lie down and drink eagerly, for he was intolerably thirsty.

"Splendid water!" he said, wiping his mouth. "This is a good place to rest in."

“No, better run farther; perhaps we are being followed,” said a voice immediately behind him.

Thomas started and turned; before him stood Javtuch.

“This devil of a Javtuch!” he thought. “I should like to seize him by the feet and smash his hang-dog face against the trunk of a tree.”

“Why did you go round such a long way?” continued Javtuch. “You had much better have chosen the path by which I came; it leads directly by the stable. Besides, it is a pity about your coat. Such splendid cloth! How much did it cost an ell? Well, we have had a long enough walk; it is time to go home.”

The philosopher followed Javtuch in a very depressed state.

“Now the accursed witch will attack me in earnest,” he thought. “But what have I really to fear? Am I not a Cossack? I have read the prayers for two nights already; with God's help I will get through the third night also. It is plain that the witch must have a terrible load of guilt upon her, else the evil one would not help her so much.”

Feeling somewhat encouraged by these reflections, he returned to the court-yard and asked Dorosch, who sometimes, by the steward's permission, had access to the wine-cellar, to fetch him a small bottle of brandy. The two friends sat down before a barn and drank a pretty large one. Suddenly the philosopher jumped up and said, “I want musicians! Bring some musicians!”

But without waiting for them he began to dance the “tropak” in the court-yard. He danced till tea-time, and the servants, who, as is usual in such cases, had formed a small circle round him, grew at last tired of watching him, and went away saying, “By heavens, the man can dance!”

Finally the philosopher lay down in the place where he had been dancing, and fell asleep. It was necessary to pour a bucket of cold water on his head to wake him up for supper. At the meal he enlarged on the topic of what a Cossack ought to be, and how he should not be afraid of anything in the world.

“It is time,” said Javtuch; “let us go.”

“I wish I could put a lighted match to your tongue,” thought the philosopher; then he stood up and said, “Let us go.”

On their way to the church, the philosopher kept looking round him on all sides, and tried to start a conversation with his companions; but both Javtuch and Dorosch remained silent. It was a weird night. In the distance wolves howled continually, and even the barking of the dogs had something

unearthly about it.

“That doesn't sound like wolves howling, but something else,” remarked Dorosch.

Javtuch still kept silence, and the philosopher did not know what answer to make.

They reached the church and walked over the old wooden planks, whose rotten condition showed how little the lord of the manor cared about God and his soul. Javtuch and Dorosch left the philosopher alone, as on the previous evenings.

There was still the same atmosphere of menacing silence in the church, in the centre of which stood the coffin with the terrible witch inside it.

“I am not afraid, by heavens, I am not afraid!” he said; and after drawing a circle round himself as before, he began to read the prayers and exorcisms.

An oppressive silence prevailed; the flickering candles filled the church with their clear light. The philosopher turned one page after another, and noticed that he was not reading what was in the book. Full of alarm, he crossed himself and began to sing a hymn. This calmed him somewhat, and he resumed his reading, turning the pages rapidly as he did so.

Suddenly in the midst of the sepulchral silence the iron lid of the coffin sprang open with a jarring noise, and the dead witch stood up. She was this time still more terrible in aspect than at first. Her teeth chattered loudly and her lips, through which poured a stream of dreadful curses, moved convulsively. A whirlwind arose in the church; the icons of the saints fell on the ground, together with the broken window-panes. The door was wrenched from its hinges, and a huge mass of monstrous creatures rushed into the church, which became filled with the noise of beating wings and scratching claws. All these creatures flew and crept about, seeking for the philosopher, from whose brain the last fumes of intoxication had vanished. He crossed himself ceaselessly and uttered prayer after prayer, hearing all the time the whole unclean swarm rustling about him, and brushing him with the tips of their wings. He had not the courage to look at them; he only saw one uncouth monster standing by the wall, with long, shaggy hair and two flaming eyes. Over him something hung in the air which looked like a gigantic bladder covered with countless crabs' claws and scorpions' stings, and with black clods of earth hanging from it. All these monsters stared about seeking him, but they could not find him, since he was protected by his sacred circle.

“Bring the Viy(3)! Bring the Viy!” cried the witch.

A sudden silence followed; the howling of wolves was heard in the distance, and soon heavy footsteps resounded through the church. Thomas looked up furtively and saw that an ungainly human figure with crooked legs was being led into the church. He was quite covered with black soil, and his hands and feet resembled knotted roots. He trod heavily and stumbled at every step. His eyelids were of enormous length. With terror, Thomas saw that his face was of iron. They led him in by the arms and placed him near Thomas's circle.

"Raise my eyelids! I can't see anything!" said the Viy in a dull, hollow voice, and they all hastened to help in doing so.

"Don't look!" an inner voice warned the philosopher; but he could not restrain from looking.

"There he is!" exclaimed the Viy, pointing an iron finger at him; and all the monsters rushed on him at once.

Struck dumb with terror, he sank to the ground and died.

At that moment there sounded a cock's crow for the second time; the earth-spirits had not heard the first one. In alarm they hurried to the windows and the door to get out as quickly as possible. But it was too late; they all remained hanging as though fastened to the door and the windows.

When the priest came he stood amazed at such a desecration of God's house, and did not venture to read prayers there. The church remained standing as it was, with the monsters hanging on the windows and the door. Gradually it became overgrown with creepers, bushes, and wild heather, and no one can discover it now.

...

When the report of this event reached Kieff, and the theologian Khalava heard what a fate had overtaken the philosopher Thomas, he sank for a whole hour into deep reflection. He had greatly altered of late; after finishing his studies he had become bell-ringer of one of the chief churches in the city, and he always appeared with a bruised nose, because the belfry staircase was in a ruinous condition.

"Have you heard what has happened to Thomas?" said Tiberius Gorobetz, who had become a philosopher and now wore a moustache.

"Yes; God had appointed it so," answered the bell-ringer. "Let us go to the ale-house; we will drink a glass to his memory."

The young philosopher, who, with the enthusiasm of a novice, had made such full use of his privileges as a student that his breeches and coat and even

his cap reeked of brandy and tobacco, agreed readily to the proposal.

“He was a fine fellow, Thomas,” said the bell-ringer as the limping innkeeper set the third jug of beer before him. “A splendid fellow! And lost his life for nothing!”

“I know why he perished,” said Gorobetz; “because he was afraid. If he had not feared her, the witch could have done nothing to him. One ought to cross oneself incessantly and spit exactly on her tail, and then not the least harm can happen. I know all about it, for here, in Kieff, all the old women in the market-place are witches.”

The bell-ringer nodded assent. But being aware that he could not say any more, he got up cautiously and went out, swaying to the right and left in order to find a hiding-place in the thick steppe grass outside the town. At the same time, in accordance with his old habits, he did not forget to steal an old boot-sole which lay on the ale-house bench.

THE END

A MAY NIGHT

I

Songs were echoing in the village street. It was just the time when the young men and girls, tired with the work and cares of the day, were in the habit of assembling for the dance. In the mild evening light, cheerful songs blended with mild melodies. A mysterious twilight obscured the blue sky and made everything seem indistinct and distant. It was growing dark, but the songs were not hushed.

A young Cossack, Levko by name, the son of the village headman, had stolen away from the singers, guitar in hand. With his embroidered cap set awry on his head, and his hand playing over the strings, he stepped a measure to the music. Then he stopped at the door of a house half hidden by blossoming cherry-trees. Whose house was it? To whom did the door lead? After a little while he played and sang:

“The night is nigh, the sun is down,
Come out to me, my love, my own!”

“No one is there; my bright-eyed beauty is fast asleep,” said the Cossack to himself as he finished the song and approached the window. “Hanna, Hanna, are you asleep, or won't you come to me? Perhaps you are afraid someone will see us, or will not expose your delicate face to the cold! Fear nothing! The evening is warm, and there is no one near. And if anyone comes I will wrap you in my caftan, fold you in my arms, and no one will see us. And if the wind blows cold, I will press you close to my heart, warm you with my kisses, and lay my cap on your tiny feet, my darling. Only throw me a single glance. No, you are not asleep, you proud thing!” he exclaimed now louder, in a voice which betrayed his annoyance at the humiliation. “You are laughing at me! Good-bye!”

Then he turned away, set his cap jauntily, and, still lightly touching his guitar, stepped back from the window. Just then the wooden handle of the door turned with a grating noise, and a girl who counted hardly seventeen springs looked out timidly through the darkness, and still keeping hold of the handle, stepped over the threshold. In the twilight her bright eyes shone like little stars, her coral necklace gleamed, and the pink flush on her cheeks did not escape the Cossack's observation.

“How impatient you are!” she said in a whisper. “You get angry so quickly! Why did you choose such a time? There are crowds of people in the

street... I tremble all over.”

“Don't tremble, my darling! Come close to me!” said the Cossack, putting down his guitar, which hung on a long strap round his neck, and sitting down with her on the door-step. “You know I find it hard to be only an hour without seeing you.”

“Do you know what I am thinking of?” interrupted the young girl, looking at him thoughtfully. “Something whispers to me that we shall not see so much of each other in the future. The people here are not well disposed to you, the girls look so envious, and the young fellows... I notice also that my mother watches me carefully for some time past. I must confess I was happier when among strangers.” Her face wore a troubled expression as she spoke.

“You are only two months back at home, and are already tired of it!” said the Cossack. “And of me too perhaps?”

“Oh no!” she replied, smiling. “I love you, you black-eyed Cossack! I love you because of your dark eyes, and my heart laughs in my breast when you look at me. I feel so happy when you come down the street stroking your black moustache, and enjoy listening to your song when you play the guitar!”

“Oh my Hanna!” exclaimed the Cossack, kissing the girl and drawing her closer to him.

“Stop, Levko! Tell me whether you have spoken to your father?”

“About what?” he answered absent-mindedly. “About my marrying you? Yes, I did.” But he seemed to speak almost reluctantly.

“Well? What more?”

“What can you make of him? The old curmudgeon pretends to be deaf; he will not listen to anything, and blames me for loafing with fellows, as he says, about the streets. But don't worry, Hanna! I give you my word as a Cossack, I will break his obstinacy.”

“You only need to say a word, Levko, and it shall be as you wish. I know that of myself. Often I do not wish to obey you, but you speak only a word, and I involuntarily do what you wish. Look, look!” she continued, laying her head on his shoulder and raising her eyes to the sky, the immeasurable heaven of the Ukraine; “there far away are twinkling little stars—one, two, three, four, five. Is it not true that those are angels opening the windows of their bright little homes and looking down on us. Is it not so, Levko? They are looking down on earth. If men had wings like birds, how high they could fly. But ah! not even our oaks reach the sky. Still people say there is in some distant land a tree whose top reaches to heaven, and that God descends by it

on the earth, the night before Easter.”

“No, Hanna. God has a long ladder which reaches from heaven to earth. Before Easter Sunday holy angels set it up, and as soon as God puts His foot on the first rung, all evil spirits take to flight and fall in swarms into hell. That is why on Easter Day there are none of them on earth.”

“How gently the water ripples! Like a child in the cradle,” continued Hanna, pointing to the pool begirt by dark maples and weeping-willows, whose melancholy branches drooped in the water. On a hill near the wood slumbered an old house with closed shutters. The roof was covered with moss and weeds; leafy apple-trees had grown high up before the windows; the wood cast deep shadows on it; a grove of nut-trees spread from the foot of the hill as far as the pool.

“I remember as if in a dream,” said Hanna, keeping her eyes fixed on the house, “a long, long time ago, when I was little and lived with mother, someone told a terrible story about this house. You must know it-tell me.”

“God forbid, my dear child! Old women and stupid people talk a lot of nonsense. It would only frighten you and spoil your sleep.”

“Tell me, my darling, my black-eyed Cossack,” she said, pressing her cheek to his. “No, you don't love me; you have certainly another sweetheart! I will not be frightened, and will sleep quite quietly. If you refuse to tell me, *that* would keep me awake. I would keep on worrying and thinking about it. Tell me, Levko!”

“Certainly it is true what people say, that the devil possesses girls, and stirs up their curiosity. Well then, listen. Long ago there lived in that house an elderly man who had a beautiful daughter white as snow, just like you. His wife had been dead a long time, and he was thinking of marrying again.

“‘Will you pet me as before, father, if you take a second wife?’ asked his daughter.

“‘Yes, my daughter,’ he answered, ‘I shall love you more than ever, and give you yet more rings and necklaces.’

“So he brought a young wife home, who was beautiful and white and red, but she cast such an evil glance at her stepdaughter that she cried aloud, but not a word did her sulky stepmother speak to her all day long.

“When night came, and her father and his wife had retired, the young girl locked herself up in her room, and feeling melancholy began to weep bitterly. Suddenly she spied a hideous black cat creeping towards her; its fur was aflame and its claws struck on the ground like iron. In her terror the girl

sprang on a chair; the cat followed her. Then she sprang into bed; the cat sprang after her, and seizing her by the throat began to choke her. She tore the creature away, and flung it on the ground, but the terrible cat began to creep towards her again. Rendered desperate with terror, she seized her father's sabre which hung on the wall, and struck at the cat, wounding one of its paws. The animal disappeared, whimpering.

"The next day the young wife did not leave her bedroom; the third day she appeared with her hand bound up.

"The poor girl perceived that her stepmother was a witch, and that she had wounded her hand.

"On the fourth day her father told her to bring water, to sweep the floor like a servant-maid, and not to show herself where he and his wife sat. She obeyed him, though with a heavy heart. On the fifth day he drove her barefooted out of the house, without giving her any food for her journey. Then she began to sob and covered her face with her hands.

"'You have ruined your own daughter, father!' she cried; 'and the witch has ruined your soul. May God forgive you! He will not allow me to live much longer.'

"And do you see," continued Levko, turning to Hanna and pointing to the house, "do you see that high bank; from that bank she threw herself into the water, and has been no more seen on earth."

"And the witch?" Hanna interrupted, timidly fastening her tearful eyes on him.

"The witch? Old women say that when the moon shines, all those who have been drowned come out to warm themselves in its rays, and that they are led by the witch's stepdaughter. One night she saw her stepmother by the pool, caught hold of her, and dragged her screaming into the water. But this time also the witch played her a trick; she changed herself into one of those who had been drowned, and so escaped the chastisement she would have received at their hands.

"Let anyone who likes believe the old women's stories. They say that the witch's stepdaughter gathers together those who have been drowned every night, and looks in their faces in order to find out which of them is the witch; but has not done so yet. Such are the old wives' tales. It is said to be the intention of the present owner to erect a distillery on the spot. But I hear voices. They are coming home from the dancing. Good-bye, Hanna! Sleep well, and don't think of all that nonsense." So saying he embraced her, kissed

her, and departed.

“Good-bye, Levko!” said Hanna, still gazing at the dark pine wood.

The brilliant moon was now rising and filling all the earth with splendour. The pool shone like silver, and the shadows of the trees stood out in strong relief.

“Good-bye, Hanna!” she heard again as she spoke, and felt the light pressure of a kiss.

“You have come back!” she said, looking round, but started on seeing a stranger before her.

There was another “Good-bye, Hanna!” and again she was kissed.

“Has the devil brought a second?” she exclaimed angrily.

“Good-bye, dear Hanna!”

“There is a third!”

“Good-bye, good-bye, good-bye, Hanna!” and kisses rained from all sides.

“Why, there is a whole band of them!” cried Hanna, tearing herself from the youths who had gathered round. “Are they never tired of the eternal kissing? I shall soon not be able to show myself on the street!” So saying, she closed the door and bolted it.

II

THE VILLAGE HEADMAN

Do you know a Ukraine night? No, you do not know a night in the Ukraine. Gaze your full on it. The moon shines in the midst of the sky; the immeasurable vault of heaven seems to have expanded to infinity; the earth is bathed in silver light; the air is warm, voluptuous, and redolent of innumerable sweet scents. Divine night! Magical night! Motionless, but inspired with divine breath, the forests stand, casting enormous shadows and wrapped in complete darkness. Calmly and placidly sleep the lakes surrounded by dark green thickets. The virginal groves of the hawthorns and cherry-trees stretch their roots timidly into the cool water; only now and then their leaves rustle unwillingly when that freebooter, the night-wind, steals up to kiss them. The whole landscape is hushed in slumber; but there is a mysterious breath upon the heights. One falls into a weird and unearthly mood, and silvery apparitions rise from the depths. Divine night! Magical night! Suddenly the woods, lakes, and steppes become alive. The nightingales of the Ukraine are singing, and it seems as though the moon itself were listening to their song. The village sleeps as though under a magic spell; the cottages shine in the moonlight against the darkness of the woods behind them. The songs grow silent, and all is still. Only here and there is a glimmer of light in some small window. Some families, sitting up late, are finishing their supper at the thresholds of their houses.

“No, the ‘gallop’ is not danced like that! Now I see, it does not go properly! What did my godfather tell me? So then! Hop! tralala! Hop! tralala! Hop! Hop! Hop!” Thus a half-intoxicated, middle-aged Cossack talked to himself as he danced through the street. “By heaven, a ‘gallop’ is not danced like that! What is the use of lying! On with it then! Hop! tralala! Hop! tralala! Hop! Hop! Hop!”

“See that fool there! If he were only a young fellow! But to see a grown man dancing, and the children laughing at him,” exclaimed an old woman who was passing by, carrying a bundle of straw. “Go home! It is quite time to go to sleep!”

“I am going!” said the Cossack, standing still. “I am going. What do I care about the headman? He thinks because he is the eldest, and throws cold

water on people, and carries his head high. As to being headman-I myself am a headman. Yes indeed-otherwise-" As he spoke, he stepped up to the door of the first cottage he came to, stood at the window, drumming with his fingers on the glass, and feeling for the door-handle. "Woman, open! Woman, open quickly I tell you! It is time for me to go to sleep!"

"Where are you going, Kalenik? That is the wrong house!" some young girls who were returning from the dance called to him as they passed. "Shall we show you yours?"

"Yes, please, ladies!"

"Ladies! Just listen to him!" one of them exclaimed. "How polite Kalenik is! We will show you the house-but no, first dance before us!"

"Dance before you? Oh, you are clever girls!" said Kalenik in a drawling voice, and laughing. He threatened them with his finger, and stumbled, not being able to stand steadily. "And will you let yourselves be kissed? I will kiss the lot." With tottering steps he began to run after them.

The girls cried out and ran apart; but they soon plucked up courage and went on the other side of the road, when they saw that Kalenik was not firm on his legs.

"There is your house!" they called to him, pointing to one which was larger than the rest, and which belonged to the village headman.

Kalenik turned towards it, and began again to revile the headman.

But who is this headman to whose disadvantage so much has been said? Oh, he is a very important person in the village. Before Kalenik reaches his house, we shall doubtless find enough time to say something about him. Everyone in the village takes off his cap at the sight of him, and even the smallest girls wish him good morning. Which of the young Cossacks would not like to be a headman? The headman has an entry everywhere, and every stalwart rustic stands respectfully, cap in hand, so long as the headman feels round his snuff-box with his thick, coarse finger. In parish-meetings and other assemblies, although his power may be limited by the votes of the majority, the headman still maintains the upper hand, and sends whom he chooses to make roads or dig ditches. In outward manners he is morose and severe, and not fond of talking. Long ago, when the Empress Catherine of blessed memory journeyed to the Crimea, he was chosen as one of her escort for two whole days, and had the high honour of sitting with the imperial coachman on the box.

Since then the headman has formed the habit of shaking his head

solemnly and thoughtfully, of stroking his long, drooping moustache, and of darting hawk-like glances from his eyes. Whatever the topic of conversation may be, he manages to refer to his having accompanied the Empress, and sat on the box of the imperial coach. He often pretends to be hard of hearing, especially when he hears something that he does not like. He has an aversion for dandies, and himself wears under a black caftan of cloth, made at home, a simple, embroidered, woollen waist-band. No one has seen him wear any other dress except, of course, on the occasion of the Czarina's journey to the Crimea, when he wore a blue Cossack's uniform. Hardly anyone in the village remembers that time, and he keeps the uniform packed up in a chest.

The headman is a widower, but his sister-in-law lives with him. She cooks his dinner and supper, keeps the house and furniture clean, weaves linen, and acts as housekeeper generally. The village gossips say that she is not a relation of his; but we must remark that the headman has many enemies who spread all kinds of slanders about him. We have now said what we considered to be necessary about the headman, and the drunken Kalenik is not yet half-way to his house. He continued to abuse the headman in terms which might be expected from one in his condition.

III

AN UNEXPECTED RIVAL-THE CONSPIRACY

"No, you fellows, I won't. What is the good of all those silly goings-on? Aren't you tired of these foolish jokes? People already call us good-for-nothing scapegraces. Better go to bed!" So Levko said one evening to his companions, who were trying to persuade him to take part with them in further practical jokes. "Farewell, brothers! Good night!" he said, and left them with quick steps.

"Does my bright-eyed Hanna sleep?" he thought as he passed the house shaded by the cherry-trees. Then in the silence he heard the sound of a whispered conversation. Levko stood still. Between the trees there glimmered something white. "What is that?" he thought, as he crept closer and hid himself behind a tree.

By the light of the moon he saw the face of a girl standing opposite him. It was Hanna. But who was the tall man who had his back turned to him? In vain he strained his eyes; the whole figure was hidden in shadow, and the slightest forward step on Levko's part would expose him to the risk of discovery. He therefore leant quietly against the tree, and determined to remain where he was. Then he heard the girl utter his name distinctly.

"Levko? Levko is a baby," said the tall man in an undertone. "If I ever find him with you, I will pull his hair."

"I should like to know what rascal is boasting of pulling my hair," said Levko to himself, stretching out his head and endeavouring to miss no word. But the stranger continued to speak so low that he was inaudible.

"What, aren't you ashamed?" said Hanna after he had finished. "You are lying and deceiving me; I will never believe that you love me."

"I know," continued the tall man, "that Levko has talked nonsense to you and turned your head." (Here it seemed to the Cossack as though the stranger's voice were not quite unknown to him, and that he must have heard it somewhere or other.) "But Levko shall learn to know me," continued the stranger. "He thinks I don't notice his rascally tricks; but he will yet feel the weight of my fists, the scoundrel!"

At these words Levko could no longer restrain his wrath. He came three steps nearer, and took a run in order to plant a blow which would have

stretched the stranger on the ground in spite of his strength. At that moment, however, a ray of light fell on the latter's face, and Levko stood transfixed, for he saw it was his father. But he only expressed his surprise by an involuntary shake of the head and a low whistle.

On the other side there was the sound of approaching footsteps. Hanna ran hastily into the house and closed the door behind her.

"Good-bye, Hanna!" cried one of the youths, who had stolen up and embraced the headman, but started back alarmed when he felt a rough moustache.

"Good-bye, my darling!" cried another, but speedily executed a somersault in consequence of a violent blow from the headman.

"Good-bye, good-bye, Hanna!" exclaimed several youths, falling on his neck.

"Go to the deuce, you infernal scoundrels!" shouted the headman, defending himself with both hands and feet. "What kind of Hanna do you take me for? Hang yourselves like your fathers did, you children of the devil! Falling on one like flies on honey! I will show you who Hanna is!"

"The headman! The headman! It is the headman!" cried the youths, running away in all directions.

"Aha, father!" said Levko to himself, recovering from his astonishment and looking after the headman as he departed, cursing and scolding. "Those are the tricks you like to play! Splendid! And I wonder and puzzle my head why he pretends to be deaf when I only touch on the matter! Wait, you old sinner, I will teach you to cajole other people's sweethearts. Hi! you fellows, come here!" he cried, beckoning to the youths, who gathered round him. "Come nearer! I told you to go to bed, but I am differently minded now, and am ready to go round with you all night."

"That is reasonable," exclaimed a broad-shouldered, stout fellow, who was regarded as the chief toper and good-for-nothing in the village. "I always feel uncomfortable if I do not have a good fling, and play some practical jokes. I always feel as though there were something wanting, as though I had lost my cap or my pipe—in a word, I don't feel like a proper Cossack then!"

"Do you really want to bait the headman?" asked Levko.

"The headman?"

"Yes, the headman. I don't know for whom he takes himself. He carries on as though he were a duke. It is not only that he treats us as if we were his serfs, but he comes after our girls."

“Quite right! That is true!” exclaimed all the youths together.

“But are we made of any worse stuff than he? We are, thank God! free Cossacks. Let us show him so.”

“Yes, we will show him!” they shouted. “But when we go for the headman, we must not forget his clerk.”

“The clerk shall have his share, too. Just now a song that suits the headman occurs to me. Go on! I will teach it you!” continued Levko, striking the strings of his guitar. “But listen! Disguise yourselves as well as you can.”

“Hurrah for the Cossacks!” cried the stout reveller, dancing and clapping his hands. “Long live freedom! When one lets the reins go, one thinks of the good old times. It feels as jolly as though one were in paradise. Hurrah, you fellows! Go ahead!”

The youths rushed noisily through the village street, and the pious old women, aroused from their sleep, looked through the windows, crossed themselves drowsily, and thought, “There they go, the wild young fellows!”

IV

WILD PRANKS

Only in one house at the end of the street there still burned a light; it was the headman's. He had long finished his supper, and would certainly have gone to sleep but that he had a guest with him, the brandy-distiller. The latter had been sent to superintend the building of a distillery for the lords of the manor, who possessed small allotments between the lands of the free Cossacks. At the upper end of the table, in the place of honour, sat the guest—a short, stout man with small, merry eyes. He smoked his short pipe with obvious satisfaction, spitting every moment and constantly pushing the tobacco down in the bowl. The clouds of smoke collected over his head, and veiled him in a bluish mist. It seemed as though the broad chimney of a distillery, which was bored at always being perched up on the roof, had hit upon the idea of taking a little recreation, and had now settled itself comfortably at the headman's table. Close under his nose bristled his short, thick moustache, which in the dim, smoky atmosphere resembled a mouse which the distiller had caught and held in his mouth, usurping the functions of a dining-room cat. The headman sat there, as master of the house, wearing only his shirt and linen breeches. His eagle eye began to grow dim like the setting sun, and to half close. At the lower end of the table sat, smoking his pipe, one of the village council, of which the headman was superintendent. Out of respect for the latter he had not removed his caftan.

“How soon do you think,” asked the headman, turning to the distiller and putting his hand before his gaping mouth, “will you have the distillery put up?”

“With God's help we shall be distilling brandy this autumn. On Conception Day I bet the headman will be tracing the figure eight with his feet on his way home.” So saying, the distiller laughed so heartily that his small eyes disappeared altogether, his body was convulsed, and his twitching lips actually let go of the reeking pipe for a moment.

“God grant it!” said the headman, on whose face the shadow of a smile was visible. “Now, thank heaven, the number of distilleries is increasing a little; but in the old days, when I accompanied the Czarina on the Perejaslov Road, and the late Besborodko—”

“Yes, my friend, those were bad times. Then from Kremenchuk to Romen there were hardly two distilleries. And now-but have you heard what the infernal Germans have invented? They say they will no longer use wood for fuel in the distilleries, but devilish steam.” At these words the distiller stared at the table reflectively, and at his arms resting on it. “But how they can use steam-by heavens! I don't know.”

“What fools these Germans are!” said the headman. “I should like to give these sons of dogs a good thrashing. Whoever heard of cooking with steam? At this rate one will not be able to get a spoonful of porridge or a bit of bacon into one's mouth.”

“And you, friend,” broke in the headman's sister-in-law, who was sitting by the stove; “will you be with us the whole time without your wife?”

“Do I want her then? If she were only passably good-looking-”

“She is not pretty, then?” asked the headman with a questioning glance.

“How should she be; as old as Satan, and with a face as full of wrinkles as an empty purse,” said the distiller, shaking again with laughter.

Then a noise was heard at the door, which opened and a Cossack stepped over the threshold without removing his cap, and remained standing in an absent-minded way in the middle of the room, with open mouth and gazing at the ceiling. It was Kalenik, whose acquaintance we have already made.

“Now I am at home,” he said, taking his seat by the door, without taking any notice of those present. “Ah! to what a length Satan made the road stretch. I went on and on, and there was no end. My legs are quite broken. Woman, bring me my fur blanket to lie down on. There it is in the corner; but mind you don't upset the little pot of snuff. But no; better not touch it! Leave it alone! You are really quite drunk-I had better get it myself.”

Kalenik tried to rise, but an invincible power fettered him to his seat.

“That's a nice business!” said the headman. “He comes into a strange house, and behaves as though he were at home! Push him out, in heaven's name!”

“Let him rest a bit, friend!” said the distiller, seizing the headman's arm. “The man is very useful; if we had only plenty of this kind, our distillery would get on grandly...” For the rest, it was not good-nature which inspired these words. The distiller was full of superstition, and to turn out a man who had already sat down, seemed to him to be tantamount to invoking the devil.

“That comes of being old,” grumbled Kalenik, stretching himself out along the seat. “People might say I was drunk, but no, I am not! Why should I

lie? I am ready to tell the headman to his face! Who is the headman anyway? May he break his neck, the son of a dog! I spit at him! May he be run over by a cart, the one-eyed devil!"

"Ah! the drunken sot has crawled into the house, and now he lays his paws on the table," said the headman, rising angrily; but at that moment a heavy stone, breaking a window-pane to pieces, fell at his feet. The headman remained standing. "If I knew," he said, "what jail-bird has thrown it, I would give him something. What devil's trick is this?" he continued, looking at the stone, which he held in his hand, with burning eyes. "I wish I could choke him with it!"

"Stop! Stop! God preserve you, friend!" broke in the distiller, looking pale. "God keep you in this world and the next, but don't curse anyone so."

"Ah! now we have his defender! May he be ruined!"

"Listen, friend! You don't know what happened to my late mother-in-law."

"Your mother-in-law?"

"Yes, my mother-in-law. One evening, perhaps rather earlier than this, they were sitting at supper, my late mother-in-law, my father-in-law, their two servants, and five children. My mother-in-law emptied some dumplings from the cooking-pot into a dish in order to cool them. But the others, being hungry after the day's work, did not wait till they were quite cooled, but stuck their long wooden forks into them and ate them at once. All at once a stranger entered-heaven knows whence!-and asked to be allowed to share their meal. They could not refuse to feed a hungry man, and gave him also a wooden fork. But the guest made as short work with the dumplings as a cow with hay. Before the family had each of them finished his or her dumpling and reached out their forks again for another, the dish had been swept as clean as the floor of a nobleman's drawing-room. My mother-in-law emptied out some more dumplings; she thought to herself, 'Now the guest is satisfied, and will not be so greedy.' But on the contrary, he began to swallow them faster than ever, and emptied the second dish also. 'May one of them choke you!' said my mother-in-law under her breath. Suddenly the guest seemed to try to clear his throat, and fell back. They rushed to his help, but his breath had stopped and he was dead."

"Served him right, the cursed glutton!"

"But it turned out quite otherwise; since that time my mother-in-law has no rest. No sooner is it dark than the dead man approaches the house. He then

sits astride the chimney, the scoundrel, holding a dumpling between his teeth. During the day it is quite quiet-one hears and sees nothing; but as soon as it begins to grow dark, and one casts a look at the roof, there he is comfortably perched on the chimney!"

"A wonderful story, friend! I heard something similar from my late-"

Then the headman suddenly stopped. Outside there were noises, and the stamping of dancers' feet. The strings of a guitar were being struck gently, to the accompaniment of a voice. Then the guitar was played more loudly, many voices joined in, and the whole chorus struck up a song in ridicule of the headman.

When it was over, the distiller said, with his head bent a little on one side, to the headman who was almost petrified by the audacity of the serenaders, "A fine song, my friend!"

"Very fine! Only it is a pity that they insult the headman."

He folded his arms with a certain measure of composure on the table, and prepared to listen further, for the singing and noise outside continued. A sharp observer, however, would have seen that it was not mere torpidity which made the headman sit so quietly. In the same way a crafty cat often allows an inexperienced mouse to play about her tail, while she is quickly devising a plan to cut it off from the mouse-hole. The headman's one eye was still fastened on the window, and his hand, after he had given the village councillor a sign, was reaching for the door-handle, when suddenly a loud noise and shouts were heard from the street. The distiller, who beside many other characteristics possessed a keen curiosity, laid down his pipe quickly and ran into the street; but the ne'er-do-wells had all dispersed.

"No, you don't escape me!" cried the headman, dragging someone muffled up in a sheepskin coat with the hair turned outwards, by the arm.

The distiller rapidly seized a favourable moment to look at the face of this disturber of the peace; but he started back when he saw a long beard and a grim, painted face.

"No, you don't escape me!" exclaimed the headman again as he dragged his prisoner into the vestibule.

The latter offered no resistance, and followed him as quietly as though it had been his own house.

"Karpó, open the store-room!" the headman called to the village councillor. "We will throw him in there! Then we will awake the clerk, call the village council together, catch this impudent rabble, and pass our sentence

on them at once.”

The village councillor unlocked the store-room; then in the darkness of the vestibule, the prisoner made a desperate effort to break loose from the headman's arms.

“Ah! you would, would you?” exclaimed the headman, holding him more firmly by the collar.

“Let me go! It is I!” a half-stifled voice was heard saying.

“It is no good, brother! You may squeal if you choose, like the devil, instead of imitating a woman, but you won't get round me.” So saying, he thrust the prisoner with such violence into the dark room that he fell on the ground and groaned aloud.

The victorious headman, accompanied by the village councillor, now betook himself to the clerk's; they were followed by the distiller, who was veiled in clouds of tobacco-smoke, and resembled a steamer.

They were all three walking reflectively with bent heads, when suddenly, turning into a dark side-alley, they uttered a cry and started back in consequence of coming into collision with three other men, who on their side shouted with equal loudness. The headman saw with his one eye, to his no small astonishment, the clerk with two village councillors.

“I was just coming to you, Mr Notary.”

“And I was on my way to your honour.”

“These are strange goings-on, Mr Notary.”

“Indeed they are, your honour.”

“Have you seen them then?” asked the headman, surprised.

“The young fellows are roaming about the streets using vile language. They are abusing your honour in a way—in a word, it is a scandal. A drunken Russian would be ashamed to use such words.”

The lean notary, in his gaily striped breeches and yeast-coloured waistcoat, kept on stretching forward and drawing back his neck while he talked.

“Hardly had I gone to sleep,” he continued, “than the cursed loafers woke me up with their shameful songs and their noise. I meant to give them a sound rating, but while I was putting on my breeches and vest, they all ran away. But the ringleader has not escaped; for the present he is shut up in the hut which we use as a prison. I was very curious to know who the scapegrace is, but his face is as sooty as the devil's when he forges nails for sinners.”

“What clothes does he wear, Mr Notary?”

“The son of a dog wears a black sheepskin coat turned inside out, your honour.”

“Aren't you telling me a lie, Mr Notary? The same good-for-nothing is now shut up in my store-room under lock and key.”

“No, your honour! You have drawn the long bow a little yourself, and should not be vexed at what I say.”

“Bring a light! We will take a look at him at once!”

They returned to the headman's house; the store-room door was opened, and the headman groaned for sheer amazement as he saw his sister-in-law standing before him.

“Tell me then,” she said, stepping forward, “have you quite lost your senses? Had you a single particle of brains in your one-eyed fish-head when you locked me up in the dark room? It is a mercy I did not break my head against the iron door hinge. Didn't I shout out that it was I? Then he seized me, the cursed bear, with his iron claws, and pushed me in. May Satan hereafter so push you into hell!” The last words she spoke from the street, having wisely gone out of his reach.

“Yes, now I see that it is you!” said the headman, who had slowly recovered his composure.

“Is he not a scamp and a scoundrel, Mr Clerk?” he continued.

“Yes, certainly, your honour.”

“Isn't it high time to give all these loose fellows a lesson, that they may at last betake themselves to their work?”

“Yes, it is high time, your honour.”

“The fools have combined in a gang. What the deuce is that? It sounded like my sister-in-law's voice. The blockheads think that I am like her, an ordinary Cossack.”

Here he coughed and cleared his throat, and a gleam in his eyes showed that he was about to say something very important. “In the year one thousand-I cannot keep these cursed dates in my memory, if I was to be killed for it. Well, never mind when it was, the Commissary Ledatcho was commanded to choose out a Cossack who was cleverer than the rest. Yes,” he added, raising his forefinger, “cleverer than the rest, to accompany the Czar. Then I was-”

“Yes, yes,” the notary interrupted him, “we all know, headman, that you well deserved the imperial favour. But confess now that I was right: you made a mistake when you declared that you had caught the vagabond in the

reversed sheepskin.”

“This disguised devil I will have imprisoned to serve as a warning to the rest. They will have to learn what authority means. Who has appointed the headman, if not the Czar? Then we will tackle the other fellows. I don't forget how the scamps drove a whole herd of swine into my garden, which ate up all the cabbages and cucumbers; I don't forget how those sons of devils refused to thrash my rye for me. I don't forget-to the deuce with them! We must first find out who this scoundrel in the sheepskin really is.”

“He is a sly dog anyway,” said the distiller, whose cheeks during the whole conversation had been as full of smoke as a siege-cannon, and whose lips, when he took his pipe out of his mouth, seemed to emit sparks.

Meanwhile they had approached a small ruined hut. Their curiosity had mounted to the highest pitch, and they pressed round the door. The notary produced a key and tried to turn the lock, but it did not fit; it was the key of his trunk. The impatience of the onlookers increased. He plunged his hand into the wide pocket of his gaily striped breeches, bent his back, scraped with his feet, uttered imprecations, and at last cried triumphantly, “I have it!”

At these words the hearts of our heroes beat so loud, that the turning of the key in the lock was almost inaudible. At last the door opened, and the headman turned as white as a sheet. The distiller felt a shiver run down his spine, and his hair stood on end. Terror and apprehension were stamped on the notary's face; the village councillors almost sank into the ground and could not shut their wide-open mouths. Before them stood the headman's sister-in-law!

She was not less startled than they, but recovered herself somewhat, and made a movement as if to approach them.

“Stop!” cried the headman in an excited voice, and slammed the door again. “Sirs, Satan is behind this!” he continued. “Bring fire quickly! Never mind the hut! Set it alight and burn it up so that not even the witch's bones remain.”

“Wait a minute, brother!” exclaimed the distiller. “Your hair is grey, but you are not very intelligent; no ordinary fire will burn a witch. Only the fire of a pipe can do it. I will manage it all right.” So saying, he shook some glowing ashes from his pipe on to a bundle of straw, and began to fan the flame.

Despair gave the unfortunate woman courage; she began to implore them in a loud voice.

“Stop a moment, brother! Perhaps we are incurring guilt needlessly. Perhaps she is really no witch!” said the notary. “If the person sitting in there declares herself ready to make the sign of the cross, then she is not a child of the devil.”

The proposal was accepted. “Look out, Satan!” continued the notary, speaking at a chink in the door. “If you promise not to move, we will open the door.”

The door was opened.

“Cross yourself!” exclaimed the headman, looking round him for a safe place of retreat in case of necessity.

His sister-in-law crossed herself.

“The deuce! It is really you, sister-in-law!”

“What evil spirit dragged you into this hole, friend?” asked the notary.

The headman's sister related amid sobs how the rioters had seized her on the street, and in spite of her resistance, pushed her through a large window into the hut, on which they had closed the shutters. The notary looked and found that the bolt of the shutter had been wrenched off, and that it was held in its place by a wooden bar placed across it outside.

“You are a nice fellow, you one-eyed Satan!” she now exclaimed, advancing towards the headman, who stepped backwards and continued to contemplate her from head to foot. “I know your thoughts; you were glad of an opportunity to get me shut up in order to run after that petticoat, so that no one could see the grey-haired sinner making a fool of himself. You think I don't know how you talked this evening with Hanna. Oh, I know everything. You must get up earlier if you want to make a fool of me, you great stupid! I have endured for a long time, but at last don't take it ill if-”

She made a threatening gesture with her fist, and ran away swiftly, leaving the headman quite taken aback.

“The devil really has something to do with it!” he thought, rubbing his bald head.

“We have him!” now exclaimed the two village councillors as they approached.

“Whom have you?” asked the headman.

“The devil in the sheepskin.”

“Bring him here!” cried the headman, seizing the prisoner by the arm. “Are you mad? This is the drunken Kalenik!”

“It is witchcraft! He was in our hands, your honour!” replied the village

councillors. “The rascals were rushing about in the narrow side-streets, dancing and behaving like idiots-the devil take them! How it was we got hold of this fellow instead of him, heaven only knows!”

“In virtue of my authority, and that of the village assembly,” said the headman, “I issue the order to seize these robbers and other young vagabonds which may be met with in the streets, and to bring them before me to be dealt with.”

“Excuse us, your honour,” answered the village councillors, bowing low. “If you could only see the hideous faces they had; may heaven punish us if ever anyone has seen such miscreations since he was born and baptised. These devils might frighten one into an illness.”

“I’ll teach you to be afraid! You won’t obey then? You are certainly in the conspiracy with them! You mutineers! What is the meaning of that? What? You abet robbery and murder! You!-I will inform the Commissary. Go at once, do you hear; fly like birds. I shall-you will-”

They all dispersed in different directions.

V

THE DROWNED GIRL

Without troubling himself in the least about those who had been sent to pursue him, the originator of all this confusion slowly walked towards the old house and the pool. We hardly need to say it was Levko. His black fur coat was buttoned up; he carried his cap in his hand, and the perspiration was pouring down his face. The moon poured her light on the gloomy majesty of the dark maple-wood.

The coolness of the air round the motionless pool enticed the weary wanderer to rest by it a while. Universal silence prevailed, only that in the forest thickets the nightingales' songs were heard. An overpowering drowsiness closed his eyes; his tired limbs relaxed, and his head nodded.

"Ah! am I going to sleep?" he said, rising and rubbing his eyes.

He looked round; the night seemed to him still more beautiful. The moonlight seemed to have an intoxicating quality about it, a glamour which he had never perceived before. The landscape was veiled in a silver mist. The air was redolent with the perfume of the apple-blossoms and the night-flowers. Entranced, he gazed on the motionless pool. The old, half-ruined house was clearly reflected without a quiver in the water. But instead of dark shutters, he saw light streaming from brilliantly lit windows. Presently one of them opened. Holding his breath, and without moving a muscle, he fastened his eyes on the pool and seemed to penetrate its depths. What did he see? First he saw at the window a graceful, curly head with shining eyes, propped on a white arm; the head moved and smiled. His heart suddenly began to beat. The water began to break into ripples, and the window closed.

Quietly he withdrew from the pool, and looked towards the house. The dark shutters were flung back; the window-panes gleamed in the moonlight. "How little one can believe what people say!" he thought to himself. "The house is brand-new, and looks as though it had only just been painted. It is certainly inhabited."

He stepped nearer cautiously, but the house was quite silent. The clear song of the nightingales rose powerfully and distinctly on the air, and as they died away one heard the chirping and rustling of the grasshoppers, and the marshbird clapping his slippery beak in the water.

Levko felt enraptured with the sweetness and stillness of the night. He struck the strings of his guitar and sang:

“Oh lovely moon
Thou steepst in light
The house where my darling
Sleeps all night.”

A window opened gently, and the same girl whose image he had seen in the pool looked out and listened attentively to the song. Her long-lashed eyelids were partly drooping over her eyes; she was as pale as the moonlight, but wonderfully beautiful. She smiled, and a shiver ran through Levko.

“Sing me a song, young Cossack!” she said gently, bending her head sideways and quite closing her eyes.

“What song shall I sing you, dear girl?”

Tears rolled down her pale cheeks. “Cossack,” she said, and there was something inexpressibly touching in her tone, “Cossack, find my stepmother for me. I will do everything for you; I will reward you; I will give you abundant riches. I have armlets embroidered with silk and coral necklaces; I will give you a girdle set with pearls. I have gold. Cossack, seek my stepmother for me. She is a terrible witch; she allowed me no peace in the beautiful world. She tortured me; she made me work like a common maid-servant. Look at my face; she has banished the redness from my cheeks with her unholy magic. Look at my white neck; they cannot be washed away, they cannot be washed away-the blue marks of her iron claws. Look at my white feet; they did not walk on carpets, but on hot sand, on damp ground, on piercing thorns. And my eyes-look at them; they are almost blind with weeping. Seek my stepmother!”

Her voice, which had gradually become louder, stopped, and she wept.

The Cossack felt overpowered by sympathy and grief. “I am ready to do everything to please you, dear lady,” he cried with deep emotion; “but where and how can I find her?”

“Look, look!” she said quickly, “she is here! She dances on the lake-shore with my maidens, and warms herself in the moonlight. Yet she is cunning and sly. She has assumed the shape of one who is drowned, yet I know and hear that she is present. I am so afraid of her. Because of her I cannot swim free and light as a fish. I sink and fall to the bottom like a piece of iron. Look for her, Cossack!”

Levko cast a glance at the lake-shore. In a silvery mist there moved, like

shadows, girls in white dresses decked with May flowers; gold necklaces and coins gleamed on their necks; but they were very pale, as though formed of transparent clouds. They danced nearer him, and he could hear their voices, somewhat like the sound of reeds stirred in the quiet evening by the breeze.

“Let us play the raven-game! Let us play the raven-game!”

“Who will be the raven?”

Lots were cast, and a girl stepped out of the line of the dancers.

Levko observed her attentively. Her face and clothing resembled those of the others; but she was evidently unwilling to play the part assigned her. The dancers revolved rapidly round her, without her being able to catch one of them.

“No, I won't be the raven any more,” she said, quite exhausted. “I do not like to rob the poor mother-hen of her chickens.”

“You are not a witch,” thought Levko.

The girls again gathered together in order to cast lots who should be the raven.

“I will be the raven!” called one from the midst.

Levko watched her closely. Boldly and rapidly she ran after the dancers, and made every effort to catch her prey. Levko began to notice that her body was not transparent like the others; there was something black in the midst of it. Suddenly there was a cry; the “raven” had rushed on a girl, embraced her, and it seemed to Levko as though she had stretched out claws, and as though her face shone with malicious joy.

“Witch!” he cried out, pointing at her suddenly with his finger, and turning towards the house.

The girl at the window laughed, and the other girls dragged the “raven” screaming along with them.

“How shall I reward you, Cossack?” said the maiden. “I know you do not need gold; you love Hanna, but her harsh father will not allow you to marry. But give him this note, and he will cease to hinder it.”

She stretched out her white hand, and her face shone wonderfully. With strange shudders and a beating heart, he grasped the paper and-awoke.

VI

THE AWAKENING

“Have I then been really asleep?” Levko asked himself as he stood up. “Everything seemed so real, as though I were awake. Wonderful! Wonderful!” he repeated, looking round him. The position of the moon vertical overhead showed that it was midnight; a waft of coolness came from the pool. The ruined house with the closed shutters stood there with a melancholy aspect; the moss and weeds which grew thickly upon it showed that it had not been entered by any human foot for a long time. Then he suddenly opened his hand, which had been convulsively clenched during his sleep, and cried aloud with astonishment when he saw the note in it. “Ah! if I could only read,” he thought, turning it this way and that. At that moment he heard a noise behind him.

“Fear nothing! Lay hold of him! What are you afraid of? There are ten of us. I wager that he is a man, and not the devil.”

It was the headman encouraging his companions.

Levko felt himself seized by several arms, many of which were trembling with fear.

“Throw off your mask, friend! Cease trying to fool us,” said the headman, taking him by the collar. But he started back when he saw him closely. “Levko! My son!” he exclaimed, letting his arms sink. “It is you, miserable boy! I thought some rascal, or disguised devil, was playing these tricks; but now it seems you have cooked this mess for your own father-placed yourself at the head of a band of robbers, and composed songs to ridicule him. Eh, Levko! What is the meaning of that? It seems your back is itching. Tie him fast!”

“Stop, father! I have been ordered to give you this note,” said Levko.

“Let me see it then! But bind him all the same.”

“Wait, headman,” said the notary, unfolding the note; “it is the Commissary's handwriting!”

“The Commissary's?”

“The Commissary's?” echoed the village councillors mechanically.

“The Commissary's? Wonderful! Still more incomprehensible!” thought Levko.

“Read! Read!” said the headman. “What does the Commissary write?”

“Let us hear!” exclaimed the distiller, holding his pipe between his teeth, and lighting it.

The notary cleared his throat and began to read.

“Order to the headman, Javtuk Makohonenko.

“It has been brought to our knowledge that you, old id-”

“Stop! Stop! That is unnecessary!” exclaimed the headman. “Even if I have not heard it, I know that that is not the chief matter. Read further!”

“Consequently I order you at once to marry your son, Levko Makohonenko, to the Cossack's daughter, Hanna Petritchenka, to repair the bridges on the post-road, and to give no horses belonging to the lords of the manor to the county-court magistrates without my knowledge. If on my arrival I do not find these orders carried out, I shall hold you singly responsible.

“Lieut. Kosma Derkatch-Drischpanowski,

“Commissary .”

“There we have it!” exclaimed the headman, with his mouth open. “Have you heard it? The headman is made responsible for everything, and therefore everyone has to obey him without contradiction! Otherwise, I beg to resign my office. And you,” he continued, turning to Levko, “I will have married, as the Commissary directs, though it seems to me strange how he knows of the affair; but you will get a taste of my knout first—the one, you know, which hangs on the wall at my bed-head. But how did you get hold of the note?”

Levko, in spite of the astonishment which the unexpected turn of affairs caused him, had had the foresight to prepare an answer, and to conceal the way in which the note had come into his possession. “I was in the town last night,” he said, “and met the Commissary just as he was alighting from his droshky. When he heard from which village I was he gave me the note and bid me tell you by word of mouth, father, that he would dine with us on his way back.”

“Did he say that?”

“Yes.”

“Have you heard it?” said the headman, with a solemn air turning to his companions. “The Commissary himself, in his own person, comes to us, that is to me, to dine.” The headman lifted a finger and bent his head as though he were listening to something. “The Commissary, do you hear, the Commissary

is coming to dine with me! What do you think, Mr Notary? And what do you think, friend? That is not a little honour, is it?"

"As far as I can recollect," the notary broke in, "no Commissary has ever dined with a headman."

"All headmen are not alike," he answered with a self-satisfied air. Then he uttered a hoarse laugh and said, "What do you think, Mr Notary? Isn't it right to order that in honour of the distinguished guest, a fowl, linen, and other things should be offered by every cottage?"

"Yes, they should."

"And when is the wedding to be, father?" asked Levko.

"Wedding! I should like to celebrate your wedding in my way! Well, in honour of the distinguished guest, to-morrow the pope will marry you. Let the Commissary see that you are punctual. Now, children, we will go to bed. Go to your houses. The present occasion reminds me of the time when I—" At these words the headman assumed his customary solemn air.

"Now the headman will relate how he accompanied the Czarina!" said Levko to himself, and hastened quickly, and full of joy, to the cherry-tree-shaded house, which we know. "May God bless you, beloved, and the holy angels smile on you. To no one will I relate the wonders of this night except to you, Hanna; you alone will believe it, and pray with me for the repose of the souls of the poor drowned maidens."

He approached the house; the window was open; the moonbeams fell on Hanna, who was sleeping by it. Her head was supported on her arm; her cheeks glowed; her lips moved, gently murmuring his name.

"Sleep sweetly, my darling. Dream of everything that is good, and yet the awaking will surpass all." He made the sign of the cross over her, closed the window, and gently withdrew.

In a few moments the whole village was buried in slumber. Only the moon hung as brilliant and wonderful as before in the immensity of the Ukraine sky. The divine night continued her reign in solemn stillness, while the earth lay bathed in silvery radiance. The universal silence was only broken here and there by the bark of a dog; only the drunken Kalenik still wandered about the empty streets seeking for his house.

THE MANTLE

In a certain Russian ministerial department-

But it is perhaps better that I do not mention which department it was. There are in the whole of Russia no persons more sensitive than Government officials. Each of them believes if he is annoyed in any way, that the whole official class is insulted in his person.

Recently an Isprawnik (country magistrate)-I do not know of which town-is said to have drawn up a report with the object of showing that, ignoring Government orders, people were speaking of Isprawniks in terms of contempt. In order to prove his assertions, he forwarded with his report a bulky work of fiction, in which on about every tenth page an Isprawnik appeared generally in a drunken condition.

In order therefore to avoid any unpleasantness, I will not definitely indicate the department in which the scene of my story is laid, and will rather say "in a certain chancellery."

Well, in a certain chancellery there was a certain man who, as I cannot deny, was not of an attractive appearance. He was short, had a face marked with smallpox, was rather bald in front, and his forehead and cheeks were deeply lined with furrows-to say nothing of other physical imperfections. Such was the outer aspect of our hero, as produced by the St Petersburg climate.

As regards his official rank-for with us Russians the official rank must always be given-he was what is usually known as a permanent titular councillor, one of those unfortunate beings who, as is well known, are made a butt of by various authors who have the bad habit of attacking people who cannot defend themselves.

Our hero's family name was Bashmatchkin; his baptismal name Akaki Akakievitch. Perhaps the reader may think this name somewhat strange and far-fetched, but he can be assured that it is not so, and that circumstances so arranged it that it was quite impossible to give him any other name.

This happened in the following way. Akaki Akakievitch was born, if I am not mistaken, on the night of the 23rd of March. His deceased mother, the wife of an official and a very good woman, immediately made proper arrangements for his baptism. When the time came, she was lying on the bed before the door. At her right hand stood the godfather, Ivan Ivanovitch

Jeroshkin, a very important person, who was registrar of the senate; at her left, the godmother Anna Semenovna Byelobrushkova, the wife of a police inspector, a woman of rare virtues.

Three names were suggested to the mother from which to choose one for the child-Mokuja, Sossuja, or Khozdazat.

“No,” she said, “I don't like such names.”

In order to meet her wishes, the church calendar was opened in another place, and the names Triphiliy, Dula, and Varakhasiy were found.

“This is a punishment from heaven,” said the mother. “What sort of names are these! I never heard the like! If it had been Varadat or Varukh, but Triphiliy and Varakhasiy!”

They looked again in the calendar and found Pavsikakhiy and Vakhtisiy.

“Now I see,” said the mother, “this is plainly fate. If there is no help for it, then he had better take his father's name, which was Akaki.”

So the child was called Akaki Akakievitch. It was baptised, although it wept and cried and made all kinds of grimaces, as though it had a presentiment that it would one day be a titular councillor.

We have related all this so conscientiously that the reader himself might be convinced that it was impossible for the little Akaki to receive any other name. When and how he entered the chancellery and who appointed him, no one could remember. However many of his superiors might come and go, he was always seen in the same spot, in the same attitude, busy with the same work, and bearing the same title; so that people began to believe he had come into the world just as he was, with his bald forehead and official uniform.

In the chancellery where he worked, no kind of notice was taken of him. Even the office attendants did not rise from their seats when he entered, nor look at him; they took no more notice than if a fly had flown through the room. His superiors treated him in a coldly despotic manner. The assistant of the head of the department, when he pushed a pile of papers under his nose, did not even say “Please copy those,” or “There is something interesting for you,” or make any other polite remark such as well-educated officials are in the habit of doing. But Akaki took the documents, without worrying himself whether they had the right to hand them over to him or not, and straightway set to work to copy them.

His young colleagues made him the butt of their ridicule and their elegant wit, so far as officials can be said to possess any wit. They did not scruple to relate in his presence various tales of their own invention regarding his

manner of life and his landlady, who was seventy years old. They declared that she beat him, and inquired of him when he would lead her to the marriage altar. Sometimes they let a shower of scraps of paper fall on his head, and told him they were snowflakes.

But Akaki Akakievitch made no answer to all these attacks; he seemed oblivious of their presence. His work was not affected in the slightest degree; during all these interruptions he did not make a single error in copying. Only when the horse-play grew intolerable, when he was held by the arm and prevented writing, he would say "Do leave me alone! Why do you always want to disturb me at work?" There was something peculiarly pathetic in these words and the way in which he uttered them.

One day it happened that when a young clerk, who had been recently appointed to the chancellery, prompted by the example of the others, was playing him some trick, he suddenly seemed arrested by something in the tone of Akaki's voice, and from that moment regarded the old official with quite different eyes. He felt as though some supernatural power drew him away from the colleagues whose acquaintance he had made here, and whom he had hitherto regarded as well-educated, respectable men, and alienated him from them. Long afterwards, when surrounded by gay companions, he would see the figure of the poor little councillor and hear the words "Do leave me alone! Why will you always disturb me at work?" Along with these words, he also heard others: "Am I not your brother?" On such occasions the young man would hide his face in his hands, and think how little humane feeling after all was to be found in men's hearts; how much coarseness and cruelty was to be found even in the educated and those who were everywhere regarded as good and honourable men.

Never was there an official who did his work so zealously as Akaki Akakievitch. "Zealously," do I say? He worked with a passionate love of his task. While he copied official documents, a world of varied beauty rose before his eyes. His delight in copying was legible in his face. To form certain letters afforded him special satisfaction, and when he came to them he was quite another man; he began to smile, his eyes sparkled, and he pursed up his lips, so that those who knew him could see by his face which letters he was working at.

Had he been rewarded according to his zeal, he would perhaps-to his own astonishment-have been raised to the rank of civic councillor. However, he was not destined, as his colleagues expressed it, to wear a cross at his

buttonhole, but only to get hæmorrhoids by leading a too sedentary life.

For the rest, I must mention that on one occasion he attracted a certain amount of attention. A director, who was a kindly man and wished to reward him for his long service, ordered that he should be entrusted with a task more important than the documents which he usually had to copy. This consisted in preparing a report for a court, altering the headings of various documents, and here and there changing the first personal pronoun into the third.

Akaki undertook the work; but it confused and exhausted him to such a degree that the sweat ran from his forehead and he at last exclaimed: "No! Please give me again something to copy." From that time he was allowed to continue copying to his life's end.

Outside this copying nothing appeared to exist for him. He did not even think of his clothes. His uniform, which was originally green, had acquired a reddish tint. The collar was so narrow and so tight that his neck, although of average length, stretched far out of it, and appeared extraordinarily long, just like those of the cats with movable heads, which are carried about on trays and sold to the peasants in Russian villages.

Something was always sticking to his clothes—a piece of thread, a fragment of straw which had been flying about, etc. Moreover he seemed to have a special predilection for passing under windows just when something not very clean was being thrown out of them, and therefore he constantly carried about on his hat pieces of orange-peel and such refuse. He never took any notice of what was going on in the streets, in contrast to his colleagues who were always watching people closely and whom nothing delighted more than to see someone walking along on the opposite pavement with a rent in his trousers.

But Akaki Akakievitch saw nothing but the clean, regular lines of his copies before him; and only when he collided suddenly with a horse's nose, which blew its breath noisily in his face, did the good man observe that he was not sitting at his writing-table among his neat duplicates, but walking in the middle of the street.

When he arrived home, he sat down at once to supper, ate his cabbage-soup hurriedly, and then, without taking any notice how it tasted, a slice of beef with garlic, together with the flies and any other trifles which happened to be lying on it. As soon as his hunger was satisfied, he set himself to write, and began to copy the documents which he had brought home with him. If he happened to have no official documents to copy, he copied for his own

satisfaction political letters, not for their more or less grand style but because they were directed to some high personage.

When the grey St Petersburg sky is darkened by the veil of night, and the whole of officialdom has finished its dinner according to its gastronomical inclinations or the depth of its purse-when all recover themselves from the perpetual scratching of bureaucratic pens, and all the cares and business with which men so often needlessly burden themselves, they devote the evening to recreation. One goes to the theatre; another roams about the streets, inspecting toilettes; another whispers flattering words to some young girl who has risen like a star in his modest official circle. Here and there one visits a colleague in his third or fourth story flat, consisting of two rooms with an entrance-hall and kitchen, fitted with some pretentious articles of furniture purchased by many abstinences.

In short, at this time every official betakes himself to some form of recreation-playing whist, drinking tea, and eating cheap pastry or smoking tobacco in long pipes. Some relate scandals about great people, for in whatever situation of life the Russian may be, he always likes to hear about the aristocracy; others recount well-worn but popular anecdotes, as for example that of the commandant to whom it was reported that a rogue had cut off the horse's tail on the monument of Peter the Great.

But even at this time of rest and recreation, Akaki Akakievitch remained faithful to his habits. No one could say that he had ever seen him in any evening social circle. After he had written as much as he wanted, he went to bed, and thought of the joys of the coming day, and the fine copies which God would give him to do.

So flowed on the peaceful existence of a man who was quite content with his post and his income of four hundred roubles a year. He might perhaps have reached an extreme old age if one of those unfortunate events had not befallen him, which not only happen to titular but to actual privy, court, and other councillors, and also to persons who never give advice nor receive it.

In St Petersburg all those who draw a salary of four hundred roubles or thereabouts have a terrible enemy in our northern cold, although some assert that it is very good for the health. About nine o'clock in the morning, when the clerks of the various departments betake themselves to their offices, the cold nips their noses so vigorously that most of them are quite bewildered. If at this time even high officials so suffer from the severity of the cold in their own persons that the tears come into their eyes, what must be the sufferings

of the titular councillors, whose means do not allow of their protecting themselves against the rigour of winter? When they have put on their light cloaks, they must hurry through five or six streets as rapidly as possible, and then in the porter's lodge warm themselves and wait till their frozen official faculties have thawed.

For some time Akaki had been feeling on his back and shoulders very sharp twinges of pain, although he ran as fast as possible from his dwelling to the office. After well considering the matter, he came to the conclusion that these were due to the imperfections of his cloak. In his room he examined it carefully, and discovered that in two or three places it had become so thin as to be quite transparent, and that the lining was much torn.

This cloak had been for a long time the standing object of jests on the part of Akaki's merciless colleagues. They had even robbed it of the noble name of "cloak," and called it a cowl. It certainly presented a remarkable appearance. Every year the collar had grown smaller, for every year the poor titular councillor had taken a piece of it away in order to repair some other part of the cloak; and these repairs did not look as if they had been done by the skilled hand of a tailor. They had been executed in a very clumsy way and looked remarkably ugly.

After Akaki Akakievitch had ended his melancholy examination, he said to himself that he must certainly take his cloak to Petrovitch the tailor, who lived high up in a dark den on the fourth floor.

With his squinting eyes and pock-marked face, Petrovitch certainly did not look as if he had the honour to make frock-coats and trousers for high officials-that is to say, when he was sober, and not absorbed in more pleasant diversions.

I might dispense here with dwelling on this tailor; but since it is the custom to portray the physiognomy of every separate personage in a tale, I must give a better or worse description of Petrovitch. Formerly when he was a simple serf in his master's house, he was merely called Gregor. When he became free, he thought he ought to adorn himself with a new name, and dubbed himself Petrovitch; at the same time he began to drink lustily, not only on the high festivals but on all those which are marked with a cross in the calendar. By thus solemnly celebrating the days consecrated by the Church, he considered that he was remaining faithful to the traditions of his childhood; and when he quarrelled with his wife, he shouted that she was an earthly minded creature and a German. Of this lady we have nothing more to

relate than that she was the wife of Petrovitch, and that she did not wear a kerchief but a cap on her head. For the rest, she was not pretty; only the soldiers looked at her as they passed, then they twirled their moustaches and walked on, laughing.

Akaki Akakievitch accordingly betook himself to the tailor's attic. He reached it by a dark, dirty, damp staircase, from which, as in all the inhabited houses of the poorer class in St Petersburg, exhaled an effluvia of spirits vexatious to nose and eyes alike. As the titular councillor climbed these slippery stairs, he calculated what sum Petrovitch could reasonably ask for repairing his cloak, and determined only to give him a rouble.

The door of the tailor's flat stood open in order to provide an outlet for the clouds of smoke which rolled from the kitchen, where Petrovitch's wife was just then cooking fish. Akaki, his eyes smarting, passed through the kitchen without her seeing him, and entered the room where the tailor sat on a large, roughly made, wooden table, his legs crossed like those of a Turkish pasha, and, as is the custom of tailors, with bare feet. What first arrested attention, when one approached him, was his thumb nail, which was a little misshapen but as hard and strong as the shell of a tortoise. Round his neck were hung several skeins of thread, and on his knees lay a tattered coat. For some minutes he had been trying in vain to thread his needle. He was first of all angry with the gathering darkness, then with the thread.

"Why the deuce won't you go in, you worthless scoundrel!" he exclaimed.

Akaki saw at once that he had come at an inopportune moment. He wished he had found Petrovitch at a more favourable time, when he was enjoying himself-when, as his wife expressed it, he was having a substantial ration of brandy. At such times the tailor was extraordinarily ready to meet his customer's proposals with bows and gratitude to boot. Sometimes indeed his wife interfered in the transaction, and declared that he was drunk and promised to do the work at much too low a price; but if the customer paid a trifle more, the matter was settled.

Unfortunately for the titular councillor, Petrovitch had just now not yet touched the brandy flask. At such moments he was hard, obstinate, and ready to demand an exorbitant price.

Akaki foresaw this danger, and would gladly have turned back again, but it was already too late. The tailor's single eye-for he was one-eyed-had already noticed him, and Akaki Akakievitch murmured involuntarily "Good day, Petrovitch."

“Welcome, sir,” answered the tailor, and fastened his glance on the titular councillor's hand to see what he had in it.

“I come just-merely-in order-I want-”

We must here remark that the modest titular councillor was in the habit of expressing his thoughts only by prepositions, adverbs, or particles, which never yielded a distinct meaning. If the matter of which he spoke was a difficult one, he could never finish the sentence he had begun. So that when transacting business, he generally entangled himself in the formula “Yes-it is indeed true that-” Then he would remain standing and forget what he wished to say, or believe that he had said it.

“What do you want, sir?” asked Petrovitch, scrutinising him from top to toe with a searching look, and contemplating his collar, sleeves, coat, buttons-in short his whole uniform, although he knew them all very well, having made them himself. That is the way of tailors whenever they meet an acquaintance.

Then Akaki answered, stammering as usual, “I want-Petrovitch-this cloak-you see-it is still quite good, only a little dusty-and therefore it looks a little old. It is, however, still quite new, only that it is worn a little-there in the back and here in the shoulder-and there are three quite little splits. You see it is hardly worth talking about; it can be thoroughly repaired in a few minutes.”

Petrovitch took the unfortunate cloak, spread it on the table, contemplated it in silence, and shook his head. Then he stretched his hand towards the window-sill for his snuff-box, a round one with the portrait of a general on the lid. I do not know whose portrait it was, for it had been accidentally injured, and the ingenious tailor had gummed a piece of paper over it.

After Petrovitch had taken a pinch of snuff, he examined the cloak again, held it to the light, and once more shook his head. Then he examined the lining, took a second pinch of snuff, and at last exclaimed, “No! that is a wretched rag! It is beyond repair!”

At these words Akaki's courage fell.

“What!” he cried in the querulous tone of a child. “Can this hole really not be repaired? Look! Petrovitch; there are only two rents, and you have enough pieces of cloth to mend them with.”

“Yes, I have enough pieces of cloth; but how should I sew them on? The stuff is quite worn out; it won't bear another stitch.”

“Well, can't you strengthen it with another piece of cloth?”

“No, it won't bear anything more; cloth after all is only cloth, and in its present condition a gust of wind might blow the wretched mantle into tatters.”

“But if you could only make it last a little longer, do you see-really-”

“No!” answered Petrovitch decidedly. “There is nothing more to be done with it; it is completely worn out. It would be better if you made yourself foot bandages out of it for the winter; they are warmer than stockings. It was the Germans who invented stockings for their own profit.” Petrovitch never lost an opportunity of having a hit at the Germans. “You must certainly buy a new cloak,” he added.

“A new cloak?” exclaimed Akaki Akakievitch, and it grew dark before his eyes. The tailor's work-room seemed to go round with him, and the only object he could clearly distinguish was the paper-patched general's portrait on the tailor's snuff-box. “A new cloak!” he murmured, as though half asleep. “But I have no money.”

“Yes, a new cloak,” repeated Petrovitch with cruel calmness.

“Well, even if I did decide on it-how much-”

“You mean how much would it cost?”

“Yes.”

“About a hundred and fifty roubles,” answered the tailor, pursing his lips. This diabolical tailor took a special pleasure in embarrassing his customers and watching the expression of their faces with his squinting single eye.

“A hundred and fifty roubles for a cloak!” exclaimed Akaki Akakievitch in a tone which sounded like an outcry-possibly the first he had uttered since his birth.

“Yes,” replied Petrovitch. “And then the marten-fur collar and silk lining for the hood would make it up to two hundred roubles.”

“Petrovitch, I adjure you!” said Akaki Akakievitch in an imploring tone, no longer hearing nor wishing to hear the tailor's words, “try to make this cloak last me a little longer.”

“No, it would be a useless waste of time and work.”

After this answer, Akaki departed, feeling quite crushed; while Petrovitch, with his lips firmly pursed up, feeling pleased with himself for his firmness and brave defence of the art of tailoring, remained sitting on the table.

Meanwhile Akaki wandered about the streets like a somnambulist, at random and without an object. “What a terrible business!” he said to himself.

“Really, I could never have believed that it would come to that. No,” he continued after a short pause, “I could not have guessed that it would come to that. Now I find myself in a completely unexpected situation-in a difficulty that-”

As he thus continued his monologue, instead of approaching his dwelling, he went, without noticing it, in quite a wrong direction. A chimney-sweep brushed against him and blackened his back as he passed by. From a house where building was going on, a bucket of plaster of Paris was emptied on his head. But he saw and heard nothing. Only when he collided with a sentry, who, after he had planted his halberd beside him, was shaking out some snuff from his snuff-box with a bony hand, was he startled out of his reverie.

“What do you want?” the rough guardian of civic order exclaimed. “Can't you walk on the pavement properly?”

This sudden address at last completely roused Akaki from his torpid condition. He collected his thoughts, considered his situation clearly, and began to take counsel with himself seriously and frankly, as with a friend to whom one entrusts the most intimate secrets.

“No!” he said at last. “To-day I will get nothing from Petrovitch-to-day he is in a bad humour-perhaps his wife has beaten him-I will look him up again next Sunday. On Saturday evenings he gets intoxicated; then the next day he wants a pick-me-up-his wife gives him no money-I squeeze a ten-kopeck piece into his hand; then he will be more reasonable and we can discuss the cloak further.”

Encouraged by these reflections, Akaki waited patiently till Sunday. On that day, having seen Petrovitch's wife leave the house, he betook himself to the tailor's and found him, as he had expected, in a very depressed state as the result of his Saturday's dissipation. But hardly had Akaki let a word fall about the mantle than the diabolical tailor awoke from his torpor and exclaimed, “No, nothing can be done; you must certainly buy a new cloak.”

The titular councillor pressed a ten-kopeck piece into his hand.

“Thanks, my dear friend,” said Petrovitch; “that will get me a pick-me-up, and I will drink your health with it. But as for your old mantle, what is the use of talking about it? It isn't worth a farthing. Let me only get to work; I will make you a splendid one, I promise!”

But poor Akaki Akakievitch still importuned the tailor to repair his old one.

“No, and again no,” answered Petrovitch. “It is quite impossible. Trust

me; I won't take you in. I will even put silver hooks and eyes on the collar, as is now the fashion."

This time Akaki saw that he must follow the tailor's advice, and again all his courage sank. He must have a new mantle made. But how should he pay for it? He certainly expected a Christmas bonus at the office; but that money had been allotted beforehand. He must buy a pair of trousers, and pay his shoemaker for repairing two pairs of boots, and buy some fresh linen. Even if, by an unexpected stroke of good luck, the director raised the usual bonus from forty to fifty roubles, what was such a small amount in comparison with the immense sum which Petrovitch demanded? A mere drop of water in the sea.

At any rate, he might expect that Petrovitch, if he were in a good humour, would lower the price of the cloak to eighty roubles; but where were these eighty roubles to be found? Perhaps he might succeed if he left no stone unturned, in raising half the sum; but he saw no means of procuring the other half. As regards the first half, he had been in the habit, as often as he received a rouble, of placing a kopeck in a money-box. At the end of each half-year he changed these copper coins for silver. He had been doing this for some time, and his savings just now amounted to forty roubles. Thus he already had half the required sum. But the other half!

Akaki made long calculations, and at last determined that he must, at least for a whole year, reduce some of his daily expenses. He would have to give up his tea in the evening, and copy his documents in his landlady's room, in order to economise the fuel in his own. He also resolved to avoid rough pavements as much as possible, in order to spare his shoes; and finally to give out less washing to the laundress.

At first he found these deprivations rather trying; but gradually he got accustomed to them, and at last took to going to bed without any supper at all. Although his body suffered from this abstinence, his spirit derived all the richer nutriment from perpetually thinking about his new cloak. From that time it seemed as though his nature had completed itself; as though he had married and possessed a companion on his life journey. This companion was the thought of his new cloak, properly wadded and lined.

From that time he became more lively, and his character grew stronger, like that of a man who has set a goal before himself which he will reach at all costs. All that was indecisive and vague in his gait and gestures had disappeared. A new fire began to gleam in his eyes, and in his bold dreams he

sometimes even proposed to himself the question whether he should not have a marten-fur collar made for his coat.

These and similar thoughts sometimes caused him to be absent-minded. As he was copying his documents one day he suddenly noticed that he had made a slip. "Ugh!" he exclaimed, and crossed himself.

At least once a month he went to Petrovitch to discuss the precious cloak with him, and to settle many important questions, e.g. where and at what price he should buy the cloth, and what colour he should choose.

Each of these visits gave rise to new discussions, but he always returned home in a happier mood, feeling that at last the day must come when all the materials would have been bought and the cloak would be lying ready to put on.

This great event happened sooner than he had hoped. The director gave him a bonus, not of forty or fifty, but of five-and-sixty roubles. Had the worthy official noticed that Akaki needed a new mantle, or was the exceptional amount of the gift only due to chance?

However that might be, Akaki was now richer by twenty roubles. Such an access of wealth necessarily hastened his important undertaking. After two or three more months of enduring hunger, he had collected his eighty roubles. His heart, generally so quiet, began to beat violently; he hastened to Petrovitch, who accompanied him to a draper's shop. There, without hesitating, they bought a very fine piece of cloth. For more than half a year they had discussed the matter incessantly, and gone round the shops inquiring prices. Petrovitch examined the cloth, and said they would not find anything better. For the lining they chose a piece of such firm and thickly woven linen that the tailor declared it was better than silk; it also had a splendid gloss on it. They did not buy marten fur, for it was too dear, but chose the best catskin in the shop, which was a very good imitation of the former.

It took Petrovitch quite fourteen days to make the mantle, for he put an extra number of stitches into it. He charged twelve roubles for his work, and said he could not ask less; it was all sewn with silk, and the tailor smoothed the sutures with his teeth.

At last the day came-I cannot name it certainly, but it assuredly was the most solemn in Akaki's life-when the tailor brought the cloak. He brought it early in the morning, before the titular councillor started for his office. He could not have come at a more suitable moment, for the cold had again begun to be very severe.

Petrovitch entered the room with the dignified mien of an important tailor. His face wore a peculiarly serious expression, such as Akaki had never seen on it. He was fully conscious of his dignity, and of the gulf which separates the tailor who only repairs old clothes from the artist who makes new ones.

The cloak had been brought wrapped up in a large, new, freshly washed handkerchief, which the tailor carefully opened, folded, and placed in his pocket. Then he proudly took the cloak in both hands and laid it on Akaki Akakievitch's shoulders. He pulled it straight behind to see how it hung majestically in its whole length. Finally he wished to see the effect it made when unbuttoned. Akaki, however, wished to try the sleeves, which fitted wonderfully well. In brief, the cloak was irreproachable, and its fit and cut left nothing to be desired.

While the tailor was contemplating his work, he did not forget to say that the only reason he had charged so little for making it, was that he had only a low rent to pay and had known Akaki Akakievitch for a long time; he declared that any tailor who lived on the Nevski Prospect would have charged at least five-and-sixty roubles for making up such a cloak.

The titular councillor did not let himself be involved in a discussion on the subject. He thanked him, paid him, and then sallied forth on his way to the office.

Petrovitch went out with him, and remained standing in the street to watch Akaki as long as possible wearing the mantle; then he hurried through a cross-alley and came into the main street again to catch another glimpse of him.

Akaki went on his way in high spirits. Every moment he was acutely conscious of having a new cloak on, and smiled with sheer self-complacency. His head was filled with only two ideas: first that the cloak was warm, and secondly that it was beautiful. Without noticing anything on the road, he marched straight to the chancellery, took off his treasure in the hall, and solemnly entrusted it to the porter's care.

I do not know how the report spread in the office that Akaki's old cloak had ceased to exist. All his colleagues hastened to see his splendid new one, and then began to congratulate him so warmly that he at first had to smile with self-satisfaction, but finally began to feel embarrassed.

But how great was his surprise when his cruel colleagues remarked that he should formally "handsel" his cloak by giving them a feast! Poor Akaki

was so disconcerted and taken aback, that he did not know what to answer nor how to excuse himself. He stammered out, blushing, that the cloak was not so new as it appeared; it was really second-hand.

One of his superiors, who probably wished to show that he was not too proud of his rank and title, and did not disdain social intercourse with his subordinates, broke in and said, "Gentlemen! Instead of Akaki Akakievitch, I will invite you to a little meal. Come to tea with me this evening. To-day happens to be my birthday."

All the others thanked him for his kind proposal, and joyfully accepted his invitation. Akaki at first wished to decline, but was told that to do so would be grossly impolite and unpardonable, so he reconciled himself to the inevitable. Moreover, he felt a certain satisfaction at the thought that the occasion would give him a new opportunity of displaying his cloak in the streets. This whole day for him was like a festival day. In the cheerfullest possible mood he returned home, took off his cloak, and hung it up on the wall after once more examining the cloth and the lining. Then he took out his old one in order to compare it with Petrovitch's masterpiece. His looks passed from one to the other, and he thought to himself, smiling, "What a difference!"

He ate his supper cheerfully, and after he had finished, did not sit down as usual to copy documents. No; he lay down, like a Sybarite, on the sofa and waited. When the time came, he made his toilette, took his cloak, and went out.

I cannot say where was the house of the superior official who so graciously invited his subordinates to tea. My memory begins to grow weak, and the innumerable streets and houses of St Petersburg go round so confusedly in my head that I have difficulty in finding my way about them. So much, however, is certain: that the honourable official lived in a very fine quarter of the city, and therefore very far from Akaki Akakievitch's dwelling.

At first the titular councillor traversed several badly lit streets which seemed quite empty; but the nearer he approached his superior's house, the more brilliant and lively the streets became. He met many people, among whom were elegantly dressed ladies, and men with beaverskin collars. The peasants' sledges, with their wooden seats and brass studs, became rarer; while now every moment appeared skilled coachmen with velvet caps, driving lacquered sleighs covered with bearskins, and fine carriages.

At last he reached the house whither he had been invited. His host lived in

a first-rate style; a lamp hung before his door, and he occupied the whole of the second story. As Akaki entered the vestibule, he saw a long row of galoshes; on a table a samovar was smoking and hissing; many cloaks, some of them adorned with velvet and fur collars, hung on the wall. In the adjoining room he heard a confused noise, which assumed a more decided character when a servant opened the door and came out bearing a tray full of empty cups, a milk-jug, and a basket of biscuits. Evidently the guests had been there some time and had already drunk their first cup of tea.

After hanging his cloak on a peg, Akaki approached the room in which his colleagues, smoking long pipes, were sitting round the card-table and making a good deal of noise. He entered the room, but remained standing by the door, not knowing what to do; but his colleagues greeted him with loud applause, and all hastened into the vestibule to take another look at his cloak. This excitement quite robbed the good titular councillor of his composure; but in his simplicity of heart he rejoiced at the praises which were lavished on his precious cloak. Soon afterwards his colleagues left him to himself and resumed their whist parties.

Akaki felt much embarrassed, and did not know what to do with his feet and hands. Finally he sat down by the players; looked now at their faces and now at the cards; then he yawned and remembered that it was long past his usual bedtime. He made an attempt to go, but they held him back and told him that he could not do so without drinking a glass of champagne on what was for him such a memorable day.

Soon supper was brought. It consisted of cold veal, cakes, and pastry of various kinds, accompanied by several bottles of champagne. Akaki was obliged to drink two glasses of it, and found everything round him take on a more cheerful aspect. But he could not forget that it was already midnight and that he ought to have been in bed long ago. From fear of being kept back again, he slipped furtively into the vestibule, where he was pained to find his cloak lying on the ground. He carefully shook it, brushed it, put it on, and went out.

The street-lamps were still alight. Some of the small ale-houses frequented by servants and the lower classes were still open, and some had just been shut; but by the beams of light which shone through the chinks of the doors, it was easy to see that there were still people inside, probably male and female domestics, who were quite indifferent to their employers' interests.

Akaki Akakievitch turned homewards in a cheerful mood. Suddenly he found himself in a long street where it was very quiet by day and still more so at night. The surroundings were very dismal. Only here and there hung a lamp which threatened to go out for want of oil; there were long rows of wooden houses with wooden fences, but no sign of a living soul. Only the snow in the street glimmered faintly in the dim light of the half-extinguished lanterns, and the little houses looked melancholy in the darkness.

Akaki went on till the street opened into an enormous square, on the other side of which the houses were scarcely visible, and which looked like a terrible desert. At a great distance-God knows where!-glimmered the light in a sentry-box, which seemed to stand at the end of the world. At the same moment Akaki's cheerful mood vanished. He went in the direction of the light with a vague sense of depression, as though some mischief threatened him. On the way he kept looking round him with alarm. The huge, melancholy expanse looked to him like a sea. "No," he thought to himself, "I had better not look at it"; and he continued his way with his eyes fixed on the ground. When he raised them again he suddenly saw just in front of him several men with long moustaches, whose faces he could not distinguish. Everything grew dark before his eyes, and his heart seemed to be constricted.

"That is my cloak!" shouted one of the men, and seized him by the collar. Akaki tried to call for help. Another man pressed a great bony fist on his mouth, and said to him, "Just try to scream again!" At the same moment the unhappy titular councillor felt the cloak snatched away from him, and simultaneously received a kick which stretched him senseless in the snow. A few minutes later he came to himself and stood up; but there was no longer anyone in sight. Robbed of his cloak, and feeling frozen to the marrow, he began to shout with all his might; but his voice did not reach the end of the huge square. Continuing to shout, he ran with the rage of despair to the sentinel in the sentry-box, who, leaning on his halberd, asked him why the deuce he was making such a hellish noise and running so violently.

When Akaki reached the sentinel, he accused him of being drunk because he did not see that passers-by were robbed a short distance from his sentry-box.

"I saw you quite well," answered the sentinel, "in the middle of the square with two men; I thought you were friends. It is no good getting so excited. Go to-morrow to the police inspector; he will take up the matter, have the thieves searched for, and make an examination."

Akaki saw there was nothing to be done but to go home. He reached his dwelling in a state of dreadful disorder, his hair hanging wildly over his forehead, and his clothes covered with snow. When his old landlady heard him knocking violently at the door, she sprang up and hastened thither, only half-dressed; but at the sight of Akaki started back in alarm. When he told her what had happened, she clasped her hands together and said, "You should not go to the police inspector, but to the municipal Superintendent of the district. The inspector will put you off with fine words, and do nothing; but I have known the Superintendent for a long time. My former cook, Anna, is now in his service, and I often see him pass by under our windows. He goes to church on all the festival-days, and one sees at once by his looks that he is an honest man."

After hearing this eloquent recommendation, Akaki retired sadly to his room. Those who can picture to themselves such a situation will understand what sort of a night he passed. As early as possible the next morning he went to the Superintendent's house. The servants told him that he was still asleep. At ten o'clock he returned, only to receive the same reply. At twelve o'clock the Superintendent had gone out.

About dinner-time the titular councillor called again, but the clerks asked him in a severe tone what was his business with their superior. Then for the first time in his life Akaki displayed an energetic character. He declared that it was absolutely necessary for him to speak with the Superintendent on an official matter, and that anyone who ventured to put difficulties in his way would have to pay dearly for it.

This left them without reply. One of the clerks departed, in order to deliver his message. When Akaki was admitted to the Superintendent's presence, the latter's way of receiving his story was somewhat singular. Instead of confining himself to the principal matter-the theft, he asked the titular councillor how he came to be out so late, and whether he had not been in suspicious company.

Taken aback by such a question, Akaki did not know what to answer, and went away without knowing whether any steps would be taken in the matter or not.

The whole day he had not been in his office-a perfectly new event in his life. The next day he appeared there again with a pale face and restless aspect, in his old cloak, which looked more wretched than ever. When his colleagues heard of his misfortune, some were cruel enough to laugh; most of them,

however, felt a sincere sympathy with him, and started a subscription for his benefit; but this praiseworthy undertaking had only a very insignificant result, because these same officials had been lately called upon to contribute to two other subscriptions-in the first case to purchase a portrait of their director, and in the second to buy a work which a friend of his had published.

One of them, who felt sincerely sorry for Akaki, gave him some good advice for want of something better. He told him it was a waste of time to go again to the Superintendent, because even in case that this official succeeded in recovering the cloak, the police would keep it till the titular councillor had indisputably proved that he was the real owner of it. Akaki's friend suggested to him to go to a certain important personage, who because of his connection with the authorities could expedite the matter.

In his bewilderment, Akaki resolved to follow this advice. It was not known what position this personage occupied, nor how high it really was; the only facts known were that he had only recently been placed in it, and that there must be still higher personages than himself, as he was leaving no stone unturned in order to get promotion. When he entered his private room, he made his subordinates wait for him on the stairs below, and no one had direct access to him. If anyone called with a request to see him, the secretary of the board informed the Government secretary, who in his turn passed it on to a higher official, and the latter informed the important personage himself.

That is the way business is carried on in our Holy Russia. In the endeavour to resemble the higher officials, everyone imitates the manners of his superiors. Not long ago a titular councillor, who was appointed to the headship of a little office, immediately placed over the door of one of his two tiny rooms the inscription "Council-chamber." Outside it were placed servants with red collars and lace-work on their coats, in order to announce petitioners, and to conduct them into the chamber which was hardly large enough to contain a chair.

But let us return to the important personage in question. His way of carrying things on was dignified and imposing, but a trifle complicated. His system might be summed up in a single word-"severity." This word he would repeat in a sonorous tone three times in succession, and the last time turn a piercing look on the person with whom he happened to be speaking. He might have spared himself the trouble of displaying so much disciplinary energy; the ten officials who were under his command feared him quite sufficiently without it. As soon as they were aware of his approach, they

would lay down their pens, and hasten to station themselves in a respectful attitude as he passed by. In converse with his subordinates, he preserved a stiff, unbending attitude, and generally confined himself to such expressions as "What do you want? Do you know with whom you are speaking? Do you consider who is in front of you?"

For the rest, he was a good-natured man, friendly and amiable with his acquaintances. But the title of "District-Superintendent" had turned his head. Since the time when it had been bestowed upon him, he lived for a great part of the day in a kind of dizzy self-intoxication. Among his equals, however, he recovered his equilibrium, and then showed his real amiability in more than one direction; but as soon as he found himself in the society of anyone of less rank than himself, he entrenched himself in a severe taciturnity. This situation was all the more painful for him as he was quite aware that he might have passed his time more agreeably.

All who watched him at such moments perceived clearly that he longed to take part in an interesting conversation, but that the fear of displaying some unguarded courtesy, of appearing too confidential, and thereby doing a deadly injury to his dignity, held him back. In order to avoid such a risk, he maintained an unnatural reserve, and only spoke from time to time in monosyllables. He had driven this habit to such a pitch that people called him "The Tedious," and the title was well deserved.

Such was the person to whose aid Akaki wished to appeal. The moment at which he came seemed expressly calculated to flatter the Superintendent's vanity, and accordingly to help forward the titular councillor's cause.

The high personage was seated in his office, talking cheerfully with an old friend whom he had not seen for several years, when he was told that a gentleman named Akakievitch begged for the honour of an interview.

"Who is the man?" asked the Superintendent in a contemptuous tone.

"An official," answered the servant.

"He must wait. I have no time to receive him now."

The high personage lied; there was nothing in the way of his granting the desired audience. His friend and himself had already quite exhausted various topics of conversation. Many long, embarrassing pauses had occurred, during which they had lightly tapped each other on the shoulder, saying, "So it was, you see."

"Yes, Stepan."

But the Superintendent refused to receive the petitioner, in order to show

his friend, who had quitted the public service and lived in the country, his own importance, and how officials must wait in the vestibule till he chose to receive them.

At last, after they had discussed various other subjects with other intervals of silence, during which the two friends leaned back in their chairs and blew cigarette smoke in the air, the Superintendent seemed suddenly to remember that someone had sought an interview with him. He called the secretary, who stood with a roll of papers in his hand at the door, and told him to admit the petitioner.

When he saw Akaki approaching with his humble expression, wearing his shabby old uniform, he turned round suddenly towards him and said "What do you want?" in a severe voice, accompanied by a vibrating intonation which at the time of receiving his promotion he had practised before the looking-glass for eight days.

The modest Akaki was quite taken aback by his harsh manner; however, he made an effort to recover his composure, and to relate how his cloak had been stolen, but did not do so without encumbering his narrative with a mass of superfluous detail. He added that he had applied to His Excellence in the hope that through his making a representation to the police inspector, or some other high personage, the cloak might be traced.

The Superintendent found Akaki's method of procedure somewhat unofficial. "Ah, sir," he said, "don't you know what steps you ought to take in such a case? Don't you know the proper procedure? You should have handed in your petition at the chancellery. This in due course would have passed through the hands of the chief clerk and director of the bureau. It would then have been brought before my secretary, who would have made a communication to you."

"Allow me," replied Akaki, making a strenuous effort to preserve the remnants of his presence of mind, for he felt that the perspiration stood on his forehead, "allow me to remark to Your Excellence that I ventured to trouble you personally in this matter because secretaries-secretaries are a hopeless kind of people."

"What! How! Is it possible?" exclaimed the Superintendent. "How could you say such a thing? Where have you got your ideas from? It is disgraceful to see young people so rebellious towards their superiors." In his official zeal the Superintendent overlooked the fact that the titular councillor was well on in the fifties, and that the word "young" could only apply to him

conditionally, i.e. in comparison with a man of seventy. "Do you also know," he continued, "with whom you are speaking? Do you consider before whom you are standing? Do you consider, I ask you, do you consider?" As he spoke, he stamped his foot, and his voice grew deeper.

Akaki was quite upset-nay, thoroughly frightened; he trembled and shook and could hardly remain standing upright. Unless one of the office servants had hurried to help him, he would have fallen to the ground. As it was, he was dragged out almost unconscious.

But the Superintendent was quite delighted at the effect he had produced. It exceeded all his expectations, and filled with satisfaction at the fact that his words made such an impression on a middle-aged man that he lost consciousness, he cast a side-glance at his friend to see what effect the scene had produced on him. His self-satisfaction was further increased when he observed that his friend also was moved, and looked at him half-timidly.

Akaki had no idea how he got down the stairs and crossed the street, for he felt more dead than alive. In his whole life he had never been so scolded by a superior official, let alone one whom he had never seen before.

He wandered in the storm which raged without taking the least care of himself, nor sheltering himself on the side-walk against its fury. The wind, which blew from all sides and out of all the narrow streets, caused him to contract inflammation of the throat. When he reached home he was unable to speak a word, and went straight to bed.

Such was the result of the Superintendent's lecture.

The next day Akaki had a violent fever. Thanks to the St Petersburg climate, his illness developed with terrible rapidity. When the doctor came, he saw that the case was already hopeless; he felt his pulse and ordered him some poultices, merely in order that he should not die without some medical help, and declared at once that he had only two days to live. After giving this opinion, he said to Akaki's landlady, "There is no time to be lost; order a pine coffin, for an oak one would be too expensive for this poor man."

Whether the titular councillor heard these words, whether they excited him and made him lament his tragic lot, no one ever knew, for he was delirious all the time. Strange pictures passed incessantly through his weakened brain. At one time he saw Petrovitch the tailor and asked him to make a cloak with nooses attached for the thieves who persecuted him in bed, and begged his old landlady to chase away the robbers who were hidden under his coverlet. At another time he seemed to be listening to the

Superintendent's severe reprimand, and asking his forgiveness. Then he uttered such strange and confused remarks that the old woman crossed herself in alarm. She had never heard anything of the kind in her life, and these ravings astonished her all the more because the expression "Your Excellency" constantly occurred in them. Later on he murmured wild disconnected words, from which it could only be gathered that his thoughts were continually revolving round a cloak.

At last Akaki breathed his last. Neither his room nor his cupboard were officially sealed up, for the simple reason that he had no heir and left nothing behind him but a bundle of goose-quills, a notebook of white paper, three pairs of socks, some trouser buttons, and his old coat.

Into whose possession did these relics pass? Heaven only knows! The writer of this narrative has never inquired.

Akaki was wrapped in his shroud, and laid to rest in the churchyard. The great city of St Petersburg continued its life as though he had never existed. Thus disappeared a human creature who had never possessed a patron or friend, who had never elicited real hearty sympathy from anyone, nor even aroused the curiosity of the naturalists, though they are most eager to subject a rare insect to microscopic examination.

Without a complaint he had borne the scorn and contempt of his colleagues; he had proceeded on his quiet way to the grave without anything extraordinary happening to him-only towards the end of his life he had been joyfully excited by the possession of a new cloak, and had then been overthrown by misfortune.

Some days after his conversation with the Superintendent, his superior in the chancellery, where no one knew what had become of him, sent an official to his house to demand his presence. The official returned with the news that no one would see the titular councillor any more.

"Why?" asked all the clerks.

"Because he was buried four days ago."

In such a manner did Akaki's colleagues hear of his death.

The next day his place was occupied by an official of robuster fibre, a man who did not trouble to make so many fair transcripts of state documents.

...

It seems as though Akaki's story ended here, and that there was nothing more to be said of him; but the modest titular councillor was destined to attract more notice after his death than during his life, and our tale now

assumes a somewhat ghostly complexion.

One day there spread in St Petersburg the report that near the Katinka Bridge there appeared every night a spectre in a uniform like that of the chancellery officials; that he was searching for a stolen cloak, and stripped all passers-by of their cloaks without any regard for rank or title. It mattered not whether they were lined with wadding, mink, cat, otter, bear, or beaverskin; he took all he could get hold of. One of the titular councillor's former colleagues had seen the ghost, and quite clearly recognised Akaki. He ran as hard as he could and managed to escape, but had seen him shaking his fist in the distance. Everywhere it was reported that councillors, and not only titular councillors but also state-councillors, had caught serious colds in their honourable backs on account of these raids.

The police adopted all possible measures in order to get this ghost dead or alive into their power, and to inflict an exemplary punishment on him; but all their attempts were vain.

One evening, however, a sentinel succeeded in getting hold of the malefactor just as he was trying to rob a musician of his cloak. The sentinel summoned with all the force of his lungs two of his comrades, to whom he entrusted the prisoner while he sought for his snuff-box in order to bring some life again into his half-frozen nose. Probably his snuff was so strong that even a ghost could not stand it. Scarcely had the sentinel thrust a grain or two up his nostrils than the prisoner began to sneeze so violently that a kind of mist rose before the eyes of the sentinels. While the three were rubbing their eyes, the prisoner disappeared. Since that day, all the sentries were so afraid of the ghost that they did not even venture to arrest the living but shouted to them from afar "Go on! Go on!"

Meanwhile the ghost extended his depredations to the other side of the Katinka Bridge, and spread dismay and alarm in the whole of the quarter.

But now we must return to the Superintendent, who is the real origin of our fantastic yet so veracious story. First of all we must do him the justice to state that after Akaki's departure he felt a certain sympathy for him. He was by no means without a sense of justice-no, he possessed various good qualities, but his infatuation about his title hindered him from showing his good side. When his friend left him, his thoughts began to occupy themselves with the unfortunate titular councillor, and from that moment onwards he saw him constantly in his mind's eye, crushed by the severe reproof which had been administered to him. This image so haunted him that at last one day he

ordered one of his officials to find out what had become of Akaki, and whether anything could be done for him.

When the messenger returned with the news that the poor man had died soon after that interview, the Superintendent felt a pang in his conscience, and remained the whole day absorbed in melancholy brooding.

In order to banish his unpleasant sensations, he went in the evening to a friend's house, where he hoped to find pleasant society and what was the chief thing, some other officials of his own rank, so that he would not be obliged to feel bored. And in fact he did succeed in throwing off his melancholy thoughts there; he unbent and became lively, took an active part in the conversation, and passed a very pleasant evening. At supper he drank two glasses of champagne, which, as everyone knows, is an effective means of heightening one's cheerfulness.

As he sat in his sledge, wrapped in his mantle, on his way home, his mind was full of pleasant reveries. He thought of the society in which he had passed such a cheerful evening, and of all the excellent jokes with which he had made them laugh. He repeated some of them to himself half-aloud, and laughed at them again.

From time to time, however, he was disturbed in this cheerful mood by violent gusts of wind, which from some corner or other blew a quantity of snowflakes into his face, lifted the folds of his cloak, and made it belly like a sail, so that he had to exert all his strength to hold it firmly on his shoulders. Suddenly he felt a powerful hand seize him by the collar. He turned round, perceived a short man in an old, shabby uniform, and recognised with terror Akaki's face, which wore a deathly pallor and emaciation.

The titular councillor opened his mouth, from which issued a kind of corpse-like odour, and with inexpressible fright the Superintendent heard him say, "At last I have you-by the collar! I need your cloak. You did not trouble about me when I was in distress; you thought it necessary to reprimand me. Now give me your cloak."

The high dignitary nearly choked. In his office, and especially in the presence of his subordinates, he was a man of imposing manners. He only needed to fix his eye on one of them and they all seemed impressed by his pompous bearing. But, as is the case with many such officials, all this was only outward show; at this moment he felt so upset that he seriously feared for his health. Taking off his cloak with a feverish, trembling hand, he handed it to Akaki, and called to his coachman, "Drive home quickly."

When the coachman heard this voice, which did not sound as it usually did, and had often been accompanied by blows of a whip, he bent his head cautiously and drove on apace.

Soon afterwards the Superintendent found himself at home. Cloakless, he retired to his room with a pale face and wild looks, and had such a bad night that on the following morning his daughter exclaimed "Father, are you ill?" But he said nothing of what he had seen, though a very deep impression had been made on him. From that day onwards he no longer addressed to his subordinates in a violent tone the words, "Do you know with whom you are speaking? Do you know who is standing before you?" Or if it ever did happen that he spoke to them in a domineering tone, it was not till he had first listened to what they had to say.

Strangely enough, from that time the spectre never appeared again. Probably it was the Superintendent's cloak which he had been seeking so earnestly; now he had it and did not want anything more. Various persons, however, asserted that this formidable ghost was still to be seen in other parts of the city. A sentinel went so far as to say that he had seen him with his own eyes glide like a furtive shadow behind a house. But this sentinel was of such a nervous disposition that he had been chaffed about his timidity more than once. Since he did not venture to seize the flitting shadow, he stole after it in the darkness; but the shadow turned round and shouted at him "What do you want?" shaking an enormous fist, such as no man had ever possessed.

"I want nothing," answered the sentry, quickly retiring.

This shadow, however, was taller than the ghost of the titular councillor, and had an enormous moustache. He went with great strides towards the Obuchoff Bridge, and disappeared in the darkness.



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Notes

1

The author of the diary and the diary itself are, of course, imaginary. Nevertheless it is clear that such persons as the writer of these notes not only may, but positively must, exist in our society, when we consider the circumstances in the midst of which our society is formed. I have tried to expose to the view of the public more distinctly than is commonly done, one of the characters of the recent past. He is one of the representatives of a generation still living. In this fragment, entitled "Underground," this person introduces himself and his views, and, as it were, tries to explain the causes owing to which he has made his appearance and was bound to make his appearance in our midst. In the second fragment there are added the actual notes of this person concerning certain events in his life.-AUTHOR'S NOTE.

[\(<< back\)](#)

A two-wheeled cart

[\(<< back\)](#)

3

A vest is slightly more than a kilometer and about equal to 3/5 of a mile

[\(<< back\)](#)

4

The liberetto from Faust : Salut Demeure Chaste Et Pure

[\(<< back\)](#)

5

A Russian country dwelling, usually made of wood boards or logs

[\(<< back\)](#)

6

A paramedic or country doctor

[<< back](#)

A mild anti-inflammatory

[\(<< back\)](#)

A cough expectorant

[\(<< back\)](#)

A small gas burner stove

[\(<< back\)](#)

10

The most knowledgeable and respected person in a field

[\(<< back\)](#)